



There, under the cabin lamp, those two were standing.

(Frontis)

(Fathoms Deep).

Fathoms Deep

By ELIZABETH STANCY PAYNE

AUTHOR OF
"All the Way by Water."



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**Fathoms Deep
Manufacturing
Plant
Camden, N. J.**

Made in the U. S. A.

THE PORT

Above our brooding hill's dark crest of trees,
A red sun, rising lazily, peers down ;
Far out beyond the Point, a freshening breeze
Comes, clean and salt, to shrive the sleeping town.
The anchored boats gleam white against a mist
Of hyacinth, night-drawn across the bay,
And all the waking world, dawn-washed, sun-kissed,
Is ready for the day.

A copper pathway flung across the sea,
From out the molten splendor of the west ;
And little boats come creeping in, to be
Safe rocked upon the harbor-mother's breast.
A cricket's chirp upon the shore, and soon
Soft shadows dropping downward from the
heights.
Lo, in the west a silver sickle moon—
And then the anchor lights!

E. S. P.

CONTENTS

I.	IN WHICH YOU ARE INTRODUCED TO OUR HERO AND LEARN HOW WE DECIDE FOR A NAUTICAL CAREER	9
II.	CONCERNING THREE HAVENS	17
III.	HOW WE DISREGARD FAIR WARNING AND PREPARE TO EMBARK	26
IV.	ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS	34
V.	HINTING OF HOW, WHEN BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD, TROUBLE IS BOUND TO FOLLOW	50
VI.	CONCERNING FREUD AND FLAPPERS	64
VII.	RELATES HOW, HAVING INVADDED HOSTILE WATERS, IT IS UP ANCHOR AND AWAY	77
VIII.	PROVES UNSUSPECTED KINSHIP BETWEEN PEDAGOGUES AND JAZZ	91
IX.	WHICH TREATS OF HOLIDAY MAKING IN ARCADY	102
X.	HOW CONTRABAND CARGO IS BROUGHT ABOARD AND TRUCE IS DECLARED BETWEEN ADVERSARIES	114
XI.	TELLS OF ONE WHO VENTURED ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE	128
XII.	IN WHICH OUR SKIPPER, ROAMING UN- CHARTED SEAS, HEARS CIRCE SINGING .	140
XIII.	HOW WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER TRY THE TEMPER OF A WELL-MEAN- ING FELLOW	153
XIV.	CIRCE SINGS AGAIN IN THE MOONLIGHT AND AN HONEST MARINER IS IMPERILED	169

CONTENTS

XV.	IN WHICH WE ENCOUNTER SQUALLS .	182
XVI.	TELLS HOW WE RIDE OUT A GALE AND SUFFER MUTINY ON BOARD . . .	201
XVII.	DESCRIBES A MEETING WITH VOYAGERS WHO PROVE PLEASANT COMPANY .	215
XVIII.	HOW FRESH TROUBLE IS BREWED FOR OUR SKIPPER UNDER THE CABIN LAMP	228
XIX.	TELLS HOW A DETERMINED MARINER SETS SAIL IN PURSUIT OF PIRATE CRAFT	241
XX.	IN WHICH OUR SKIPPER, HAVING ABANDONED THE SHIP, EXPLORES STRANGE COUNTRY	250
XXI.	TREATS OF MAIDS, MYSTERIES, AND EMOTIONS DEEP AS THE SEA . . .	261
XXII.	TELLS HOW, BESET BY TEMPEST, WE ARE IN DIRE PERIL	274
XXIII.	HOW, ADRIFT AND ON THE ROCKS, OUR GOOD SHIP ALL BUT FOUNDERS .	282
XXIV.	IN WHICH SHIPWRECKED MARINERS, ACHIEVING SHORE, ARE MET BY EVIL TIDINGS	290
XXV.	RELATES HOW, AFTER HOURS OF SUS- PENSE, COMES NEWS OF COMPLETE DISASTER	298
XXVI.	IN WHICH IS REVEALED TO OUR BE- WILDERED SKIPPER A GLIMMER OF LIGHT THROUGH THE FOG . . .	309
XXVII.	HOW, OUR VOYAGE BEING ENDED, WE COME AT LAST TO OUR HOME HARBOR	320

Fathoms Deep

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH YOU ARE INTRODUCED TO OUR HERO AND
LEARN HOW WE DECIDE FOR A NAUTICAL CAREER

DOCTOR CHETWORTH CURTIS HAVENS, headmaster of Braceley School (though none the less, his intimates contend, a good fellow for that), stretched his legs toward the fire and stared reflectively across the hand that cupped his pipe.

"Sounds attractive, old chap,—but how do you get any exercise?"

"Exercise? Easy, my boy." Byrd Jessup sat forward in his chair and waved his cigar enthusiastically. All the enthusiasm was his, for it was his houseboat he was trying to dispose of. During dinner he had been doing his best to thrill us with the delights of houseboat life, drawing enticing pictures of the lazy, loafing, irresponsible existence, so beneficial to a man who required complete rest after exhausting expenditure of personality

FATHOMS DEEP.

(like a headmaster) and to be outdoors all summer.

“The comfort of it, my dear fellow. No style about meals. No obligation about keeping dressed up,—just an old shirt and pair of flannels and your pipe in your pocket. Drop overboard for your morning bath. Smoke and look at the sunsets. Plenty of opportunity to write if you want to. (That would catch Chetworth Curtis Havens of course.) No yelling kids on roller skates. Nobody calling you on the 'phone.” Byrd Jessup fairly radiated the desirability of it all. “Exercise, you say? All you want. When you feel like a hike over to Hempstead or out to the lighthouse you hop in the dinghy, row a few yards to shore—and there you are. Hike as far as you please. Tennis at the yacht club—I'll have you put up for summer membership ——”

“How do they get ice?” A still, small voice over by the table. Mine. Wherever Chetworth Curtis Havens enjoyed his summer rest and relaxation, at mountain camp, in island bungalow, or on Byrd Jessup's houseboat, the real work of that vacation I well knew would fall to the share of his sister Mehitable. I could see, if Chet couldn't, how determined Byrd Jessup was to land that house-

A NAUTICAL CAREER

boat on us. Byrd Jessup wanted to take his wife to Europe and had run down from Boston, ostensibly to take pot-luck with an old college pal, but really to intrigue my brother with the houseboat idea.

Houseboat delights had started with the salad and now, sitting over the fire with coffee-cup just emptied and pipe alight, Chet was really beginning to be interested. A wild April storm was lashing at the windows and tossing the branches of our Braceley elms and it was cosy in Chet's study with curtains drawn and flames leaping on the hearth.

I could see through Byrd Jessup all right. He is one of those affable fat men who are always offering cigars about and have a humorous way of smoking their own, the weed in a corner of the mouth and the eye above it closed against the smoke while the other eye twinkles at you ingenuously. Byrd Jessup is plump as well as short and his overcoats are always too long. He holds them up, climbing steps, by lifting at either side with hands held palm upward in the pockets—spread-eagle fashion. I never did put much confidence in any assertion of Byrd Jessup's and I ought to have been warned about that houseboat proposition.

He pivoted round and beamed at me with the

FATHOMS DEEP

open, twinkling eye. "Ice, Miss Hetty? Your housewifely soul speaking, dear lady. That's easy too,—more exercise for old Chet here. He hops in the dinghy, rows ashore and fetches it out. Ice wagon backs down into shallow water, y'know,—quite a picturesque feature of houseboat life: all the rowboats gatherin' round mornin's ——"

"And the milk?" I persisted gently.

"Milk too. Chet, here, hops in the dinghy and goes for it. Milk bottles left on the club dock. Everything you need delivered at the dock."

"I get you on the exercise," admitted Chet. "Looks like plenty of hopping in the dinghy for me. What do *you* think of the idea, Pen?"

My niece, Penelope Havens, who had been listening, starry-eyed, perched on the piano bench, jumped up and ran to Chet.

"Oh, Daddy, take the houseboat. Take it. Take it. I can row that dinghy and get all the supplies. I'll sweep the deck and make up the bunks—oh, what fun! Aunt Hetty won't have a thing to do but cook in that cunning galley Mr. Jessup told about. We can have chops and things ——"

Byrd Jessup, who had shifted his cigar and his twinkle to Pen, hastily shifted them back to beam at me. "Take dinners at the club if you like." He

A NAUTICAL CAREER

perceived that I was the only obstacle to speedy consummation of his scheme. Byrd Jessup is a sales-manager and intuitive about such things.

Chet was looking at me in a doubtful, half wistful way. Pen's gaze was imploring. I surprised them all.

"If there is one thing I've always hankered for," I mentioned, "it is life aboard a yacht. But I know well enough I'd be scared on any yacht—such tippy things they are. A good steady houseboat though, tied fast to an anchor . . . why, I think I'd love it, Chet. Go ahead and take the boat, if Mr. Jessup will give his word it's in good, safe condition; that it doesn't leak or anything ——"

"I'll have her caulked. Everything in apple-pie order," assured Byrd Jessup. He was rubbing his plump hands together and trying to beam on us all at once. "Say, I'll let you have my ship's clock too. Wouldn't let that go to anybody but friends. Miss Hetty and Pen, here, will enjoy telling time by the bells. And you'll all learn a heap about yachting. In a yacht harbor like Port Madison, and as members of the club and boat colony, you have to conform to yachting conventions. In fact, on the *Arcady* you'll do everything a yachtsman does but go."

FATHOMS DEEP

So it was arranged, that April night by the fire, and with Pen hanging, fascinated, over him, Chet signed the lease or whatever the nautical instrument for renting a boat is called. We were to pay four hundred dollars for all-summer use of the *Arcady* and her tender; one-half down and the remaining half on the first day of August.

There was, Byrd Jessup mentioned, a little matter of painting the outside of the cabin. He offered to deduct twenty-five dollars from the August payment if we would attend to the painting after we got aboard. It would, he pointed out, give Chet a little more exercise and be light, pleasant work. (We to supply the paint.)

"We will do her in pale gray with olive-green trimming," Pen planned dreamily. "And we'll have red geraniums and trailing vines along the rail the way they do in houseboats on the Thames. And you and I must wear middies, Aunt Hetty."

Byrd Jessup was beaming with both eyes as he shrugged into his overcoat. He had the genial look of a sales-manager who has landed a good customer. "Clean forgot about the motor-boat. Our *Hustler*—dandy little craft. She's down at the Port now with the *Arcady*. Only needs a bit of

A NAUTICAL CAREER

tinkerin' over her engine. Tell you what, folks, I'll throw in the *Hustler* too, and when you want to jaunt out to the Sound she'll come in handy. You can trail her astern on the outrigger."

"That's mighty good of you, old chap," declared Chet appreciatively.

"Don't say a word. Not a word." Byrd Jessup held up a disclaiming, cushiony palm. "Glad to do it. Want you people to have a bang-up summer. You'll find the *Arcady* in the water by June twenty-sixth according to contract; deck chairs, blankets, tools, saucepans—everything you need. Just unpack your table silver and Miss Hetty's fixin's and settle down comfy and happy. Adelaide and I will be envyin' you but the little woman would see Europe this year and we'd never start if we didn't rent the *Arcady* first, so's not to be able to change our minds."

Chet and Pen sat up till all hours poring over maps of Long Island and studying the rough plan of the *Arcady's* interior that Byrd Jessup had sketched. And all the following week Chet carolled "Asleep in the Deep" while shaving, with abysmal emphasis on the lowest bass notes—which showed how cheery he felt but made me a little uneasy. No telling how deep it would be under a houseboat two

FATHOMS DEEP

hundred yards from shore. Deep enough to cover us if we sank in our sleep, I reckoned.

But I was glad to see Chet so light hearted. He needed his vacation and it looked as if this was going to be just the right sort of vacation for us all: an informal jolly sort of life and not much work for anybody. And beautiful quiet for Chet's writing. Though the position of headmaster of Braceley School is considered a high one, the salary attached has not a relative altitude and Chet had added substantially to his income by doing textbooks for preparatory school use.

So altogether our houseboat plan seemed an excellent idea. If I had foreseen the hectic summer I was going to put in (*or if I had known about that girl*), Byrd Jessup would not have motored back to Boston with Chet's check in his pocket.

But being ignorant of what was in store, it was thrilling to picture myself as actually living on a boat. Eating and sleeping and doing housework with water always lapping softly at our front doorstep and a salt breeze coming in at the windows.

I began to go to bed nights feeling quite an old sea-dog.

CHAPTER II

CONCERNING THREE HAVENS

STRANGELY enough I was not disturbed by my friend, Maud Hemingway's broad hints in regard to the houseboat, but I *was* decidedly upset by Leila Langdon's proposal about that girl. Though I failed at the time to attribute my uneasiness to the plain warning of that subconscious instinct of protectiveness toward Chet to which I am usually keenly alert.

For thirty years and over I have looked after Chet. For almost eighteen years after Chet and Pen. Chet was a wee chap of five when mother died and I, a lanky schoolgirl of fifteen, had to undertake the homekeeping for father and the mothering of my little brother. Ten years later father left us, and after that though a strong-willed boy of prep-school age was a big responsibility for a girl in her twenties, I did the best I could. It is hard to realize now that the quiet-mannered, self-contained Doctor Chetworth Curtis Havens, headmaster of one of New England's oldest and finest

FATHOMS DEEP.

preparatory schools, was once that wild lad I had to cope with through difficult years.

Chet is thirty-seven now. He was nineteen and a sophomore when he fell in love with Pen's mother. She was a lovely little thing, fatherless and motherless like Chet, and she had come in her pathetic black to live with relatives in the town where Chet's college was located. A rather prim little New Hampshire maid whose shy spirit was first bewildered and then bewitched by Chet's impetuous wooing. A mad, brief, surreptitious love affair it was, and just before Easter vacation those two slipped away and were married. Then, after honeymooning on every saved-up cent of his allowance for the coming term, Chet brought the girl to me.

For the first time in his nineteen years he had begun to do some sober thinking. Together we three talked things out. The two young things were desperately in love but had belated sense to realize their romance must not be allowed to ruin Chet's career. I packed up my household belongings, took a cottage for the three of us in the college town, and Chet went on with his studies. He gave up frat life and athletics and even the glee-club which meant so much to him and buckled down to

THREE HAVENS

work. At Christmas time little Pen was born and the poor little inefficient girl-mother, clinging to Chet's hand and my hand, closed her brown eyes and drifted away from us.

After that Chet concentrated on work and he pressed straight upward along the path of his calling; first instructor at his college, then principal of the high school in our home town, and at thirty-two headmaster of Braceley, with several scholarly and significant letters after his name.

Every boy at Braceley knows that Doctor Havens may be depended upon for understanding sympathy and for fair play. The lad who has had a session with Chet in that quiet study back of our living-room at Braceley House, comes out with sober face and squared shoulders—and he is Chet's forevermore. "I want them to leave me," Chet said once, "with their heads up and their look steady and purposeful; not with hanging heads and rebellion in their eyes."

The big bell clangs at six-thirty, mornings, and Chet is standing at the door when the boys troop in to breakfast. Every lad who passes the headmaster has to respond to his good-morning. Says Chet: "I can tell by their 'Good-morning, Doctor Havens,' and by the way their eyes meet mine,

FATHOMS DEEP

whether they were in bed at Taps last night, and whether they are planning any deviltry for me to watch out for."

My brother Chet is not a big man. He stands five feet nine and weighs under a hundred and fifty—what the boys call "tennis build." Chet has held the tennis championship at our country club for years against younger aspirants. He is keen about all sports and Braceley School stands high in athletic records. Chet has gray eyes under straight brows, fine brown hair, cut short and brushed back from a good forehead, and a squarish chin with a sensitive mouth above it. Our Braceley boys fear his eyes and sense the determination in his chin; they don't realize how often that mouth of his, so revealing of his sympathetic nature that always feels the other fellow's side of it, moderates their punishment.

A good many fair ladies have manifested a willingness to reign in my stead at Braceley House which is a beautiful old place, the long Georgian brick dwelling under arching New England elms. And Chet is a type that appeals to women. He has a gentle manner and a whimsical humor that is never tactless. Not only his boys love Chet, but also his trustees, his neighbors—and as I have said, the

THREE HAVENS

ladies. He could dine out every night in the week or join parties motoring in to Boston for the theater, but mostly he prefers his pipe and his *Transcript* and his books. Many's the time I have crept down-stairs at midnight and ordered him up to bed.

As for me, I'm going on forty-eight and I suppose I'm prim. Chet has said over and over again, "Hetty would be a mighty good sport if she'd only let herself go." But I had a Massachusetts upbringing and if there is one thing a Massachusetts upbringing establishes in character, it is the quality of never letting one's self go. By the age of twenty-five any temperamental letting-go impulse has been securely intrenched behind a carefully erected barrier of New England reserve.

I admire neatness and I admire briskness (efficiency, they call it nowadays) and I abhor modern young women who coat their faces with powder and sit with their knees crossed. I abominate the uncorseted silhouette and cannot for the life of me see why it is bad form to show your ears yet perfectly permissible to expose your armpits. I wear my skirts over my ankles and my properly snug belt-ribbon up where a belt ought to be and I sit with both feet on the floor. My hair is brown like Chet's

FATHOMS DEEP

but thickly sprinkled with gray. At one of our country club affairs last year I heard a New York woman remark: "I never saw so many gray-headed youngish middle-aged women as there are in Massachusetts." I looked at that marcelled aburn coiffure (she was a grandmother) and was proud of Massachusetts.

I keep Chet and Pen up to the mark but they love me, my boy and my little girl. Chet says: "Old Het is that *rara avis*, a woman who can be silent when she has nervous fidgets." And Pen says: "Aunt Hetty is a slave-driver but she has the nicest shoulder to cry on, I know."

So there were Chet and Pen and I the summer we planned our houseboat adventure. The day after the Byrd Jessups sailed we received a fare-thee-well best-of-luck note informing us that the good ship *Arcady* was safely anchored in Port Madison harbor, occupying a choice position in front of the yacht club. The ship's clock was aboard and also every possible comfort that anchored mariners might desire. The tender was waiting at the dock. The summer membership at the yacht club was arranged for. And the tidy little motor-boat, *Hustler*, was all ready save for a trifle of tinkering over her engine. Everything seemed prophetic of a

THREE HAVENS

care-free and contented vacation in our Arcady afloat.

Pen and I had run up to Boston to shop for middies and other nautical supplies. I laid in dozens of jars of potted tongue and chicken, for no matter how fascinatingly complete (according to Byrd Jessup) that galley was, I did not intend to spend all my time in it. And I bought four pairs of canvas sneakers apiece for Chet and Pen; I foresaw both of them would have wet feet most of the time, hopping in and out of that dinghy.

We were coming out of the shoe shop on Winter Street when we met Maud Hemingway and I proudly but casually mentioned our summer plans.

"At Port Madison, Long Island," she exclaimed. "Why, that is where we keep our little *Dixie*. My dear, I do wish I had known you wanted a houseboat. George and I are planning a coast-to-coast motor trip this year and you might just as well have had the *Dixie* ——

"What boat have you?" she inquired with interest.

"The *Arcady*."

"Oh—Byrd Jessup's boat!" Maud Hemingway looked reflectively at the summer footwear in the shop window. She remarked:

FATHOMS DEEP

"I wish you had taken our *Dixie*, Miss Havens. She is a thoroughly seaworthy boat. And George has put in a lot of special comforts; good mattresses on the bunks and things like that. The *Dixie* is a smart looking boat, too. One of the prettiest houseboats at the Port. Oh well"—she smiled hopefully at me—"perhaps you may be very comfortable on the *Arcady*."

"We are not looking for a smart houseboat." I didn't like something at the back of Maud Hemingway's eye—a sort of sorrowfulness for us. "We shall just picnic along and enjoy the novel experience."

"Well," Maud Hemingway smiled again in sprightly fashion as she moved away, "make sure Byrd Jessup has had the *Arcady* well caulked."

When I repeated the conversation to Chet he was unconcerned.

"You saw the photograph of the *Arcady*, didn't you? Most attractive craft, I thought; and old Byrd promised to have her in apple-pie order inside and out. 'Smart' boat be hanged. If you and Pen want to add pink geraniums and yellow cushions to the *Arcady* to make her 'smart' nobody has any objection, but what I'm banking on, old girl, is solid comfort, not style."

THREE HAVENS

Which shows just how much sinister hints about caulking affect people who naturally take boats, below the water line, for granted. Maud Hemingway's well meant warning passed completely over our heads.

But about the girl, as I have said, I was tremendously upset.

Leila Langdon's letter arrived the day before our departure for Port Madison.

CHAPTER III

HOW WE DISREGARD FAIR WARNING AND PREPARE TO EMBARK

OUR trunks had gone. The Havens silver had been packed away in a safe deposit in Boston and the servants had been packed away also—down south on a visit to their relations. Everything was ready for to-morrow's journey and the arrival of Leila's letter was most disturbing.

Leila Langdon is the daughter of a very dear friend of my girlhood. I had never seen Leila or any of Alice Langdon's children. They lived out in Pittsburgh. But for five years, ever since Alice Langdon's death, Leila had never let a Christmas go by without sending to her mother's old friend a little loving message. Always I had replied promptly and so we had kept in touch through the annual exchange of correspondence. I knew that Leila Langdon was teaching in a Pittsburgh school to eke out a slender income and put her young brother and sister through college. The twins were about twenty-two now. Barry would begin

FAIR WARNING

his junior year at Yale in the autumn and Beatrice would also soon be able to help the older sister.

Vaguely I had cherished schemes about bringing Chet and Leila Langdon together some day. Leila was almost thirty—just the right age for Chet. She was dear Alice Langdon's daughter and her letters revealed the kind of young woman she was: unselfish, high-minded and very earnest in her purpose to make the most of the brother and sister left to her care.

"DEAR MISS HAVENS, (she wrote) You have so sweetly expressed a wish to know mother's children better—I wonder if you would be willing to have the twins share your vacation this summer. I know you people always go somewhere by the water and Barry and Beatrice (Trix, we call her) are wild for a sea summer.

"They would be no bother to you for they would go quite on their own; take a cottage or camp near you. And neither one of them has the slightest idea of being a responsibility to you or Doctor Havens. But I shall feel happier, since Trix is so young, to have her under the eyes of such dear friends as I count Doctor Havens and yourself. I am feeling very tired after my winter of teaching—not only day-classes but also some tutoring at night—and am planning to spend my holiday in a remote and blissfully quiet camp on one of the Maine lakes.

"If you will let the twins join you, dear Miss

FATHOMS DEEP

Havens, I shall be deeply grateful and can take my own rest from work happy in the assurance of their happiness near you. Affectionately always,

“LEILA LANGDON.”

I handed the letter to Chet who was deep in his *Boston Herald*.

“What on earth are we going to do?” I wailed.

Chet’s eyebrows were raised over the letter. “Twins. And twenty-two. Wild for a sea summer. Superb combination for a would-be literary man’s vacation! But,” he looked across at me hopefully, “we could not possibly sleep the pair of ’em on the *Arcady*, could we?”

“Certainly not. There are two small bedroom-cabins for Pen and me in front ——”

“*Forward*, Auntie,” prompted Pen.

“—and you will sleep in that main cabin at the back ——”

“*Aft*, Auntie,” Pen insisted determinedly.

“—and I suppose they couldn’t very well sleep on the upper deck. The rain would come in under the awning. Anyhow I am not going to cook for two strapping youngsters on board that boat. They’d eat us out of house and home. And you’d never do a stroke of work on your book, Chet Havens.”

FAIR WARNING

“You’re right, I wouldn’t,” agreed Chet. “Well, wire them it is out of the question.”

I frowned at the letter which Chet had tossed back across the table. “I’d like to oblige Alice Langdon’s daughter,” I hesitated. “And do something for the children. Leila needs her good rest and I feel as though she were appealing to me. If we had only known about this earlier ——”

“We don’t want ’em,” growled Chet from behind the *Herald*.

“They might board on shore,” I reflected. “Byrd Jessup spoke of a pleasant Inn near the water. I don’t believe they would annoy you, Chet, if they were not right on top of you all the time. And I could keep an eye on them ——”

“I’ll tell you!” Pen glowed with her happy idea. “Why not take that little houseboat of the Hemingways for the Langdon twins? We could have it anchored near by—but not too near on account of Daddy’s writing—and you could call good-night across, Aunt Hetty, and always make sure the male twin was in at a proper hour. Oh, do let’s have them. I’d love a boy and girl to pal with in a strange place where I don’t know a soul.”

And really Pen’s suggestion didn’t seem a bad idea—then. Six telegrams were exchanged that

FATHOMS DEEP

day between Braceley House and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And a telephone talk with the Hemingways in Boston settled the matter of the *Dixie* beautifully. Maud and her husband, just leaving on their motor trip, were delighted to dispose of their houseboat so easily.

And it was arranged that the Langdon twins should join us the day after our arrival.

It was at supper that evening, with everything ready for an early morning start, that Pen laid down her knife and fork and launched a bomb-shell.

"Aunt Hetty Havens, I know who Beatrice Langdon is. Trix Langdon—I've just remembered. Goldie Dunlop—you know, Daddy, my chum at boarding school last winter—Goldie used to talk about a Trix Langdon who came from Pittsburgh. Goldie's sister Muriel is twenty-three and she roomed with this Trix Langdon at college. And"—Pen's eyes were round as saucers—"she—this Trix Langdon—was *expelled*."

Chet looked concerned. "Sure about that, Penny?"

"Yes I am, Daddy. Goldie saw Trix Langdon once when she went up to visit Muriel over a weekend, and afterward Muriel wrote about Trix Lang-

FAIR WARNING

don's being expelled. Goldie said this Trix Langdon was a raving beauty but frightfully"—Pen's girlish voice sank to a thrilled whisper—"fast. She was suspended once for smoking cigarettes on the campus. And afterward, in her second year, was expelled for staying out almost all night automobile riding with a boy. It must be the same Trix Langdon—from Pittsburgh and all."

I looked at Chet. "Couldn't we telegraph and say we find it impossible ——"

"No, we could not, old dear. We have agreed to take on these twins and we have chartered the *Dixie*—I sent Hemingway his check to-day. Cheer up, Hetty; don't look so despairing. It may not be as desperate as you fear. When did all this happen, Pen?"

"Oh, over a year ago, Daddy. It was in Muriel's sophomore year. She will be a senior next autumn, you know."

"Then this Trix person, I gather, has been home and under sister Leila's wing for a year or more and nothing further of an outrageous nature seems to have been accomplished by her, or Pen's best particular Goldie would have heard about it and passed the morsel on. I shouldn't worry, Het, really. Case of a pretty girl, bit headstrong per-

FATHOMS DEEP

haps and expelled by a prim faculty because of some fool escapade or other. Probably nothing in it but youthful flightiness, but of course they had to make an example of her for breaking rules."

When Pen had gone up-stairs he repeated, "Don't give it another thought, Hetty. And for pity's sake stop looking as though your summer were blasted from now on. We'll just keep an eye on this frolicsome miss for a bit, and if she proves too much of a handful we'll ship her off to her sister in Maine. You are going to have a happy summer, understand; and no chit of a flapper is going to spoil it. I'll take all the responsibility."

Ha! Had I been able to foresee coming events. . . .

But I did have dark forebodings as I prepared for my last night on shore. Gazing out at our quiet lawns and the gracious elms of Braceley I reflected that at this time to-morrow night I should look out on tossing water. My bed would be rocking about, and probably the kitchen stove when I got supper. And I was expected to chaperone a wild girl who had been expelled from college for joy-riding with young men. Undoubtedly she would teach Pen to smoke cigarettes. And all the swains of Port

FAIR WARNING

Madison would be rampaging over our *Arcady* at all hours.

It didn't look like a particularly restful summer for me.

CHAPTER IV

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

POETS by the score have apostrophized June. June in a garden. June on the hilltops. June in woodsy trails. But why haven't some of them sung of June by the sea? Twinkling water blue as the gentian sky. Breeze soft as flower petals against your face yet strong and salt from illimitable distances of ocean. Radiant light everywhere—on the blue, blue sea, on rocking white boats, on bleached timbers of sun-drenched docks; the air aquiver with golden atoms so that it seems alive with motion like the dancing water.

That was June and morning as we came out on the old dock designated as "Alf's" and where Byrd Jessup had instructed us we should find the *Arcady's* tender. We had spent the night at the little Inn on shore, having arrived from Boston at the day's end in a drizzle of rain. And we had seen our *Arcady* riding at anchor out among the yachts and houseboats in the harbor.

Very small and desolate she had looked, rocking

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

about on rain-slashed, heaving gray water. Very far from the comfortable security of solid ground. And later, when I peered out at the harbor from my bedroom window, I saw blurred lights of other houseboats making skittish up-and-down zigzag patterns against the dark, motions suggestive of violent rocking about. People were actually in those houseboats, I knew, but they seemed dream people in a dream world off on some other plane. Remote. Incomprehensible.

This morning, however, everything seemed gay and adventurous. Flags whipped out smartly on the anchored boats and from the high masts in front of the yacht clubs. Dozens of lively little launches were darting about over the blue water. A nice-looking man in flannels was lifting boxes from the dock into a rowboat. He gave us a neighborly good-morning as we passed in the wake of old Alf, a bearded, stoop-shouldered giant with blue overalls stuffed into tall rubber boots, gnarled nut-brown hands and astonishingly mild and innocent blue eyes.

“Did Mister Jessup tell ye th’ *Arcady’s* dinghy wuz fit to use?” Old Alf twinkled the blue eyes at Chet. “Wall, ’tain’t. Leaks like a sieve. I been bailin’ out last night’s rainwater but it ain’t

FATHOMS DEEP

no boat leddies'll want to git inter. I cud tinker it up some—cost ye five dollars. Thought I better wait till ye come; Mister Jessup didn't leave no orders 'bout the dinghy."

Byrd Jessup of course was by this time half-way to Southampton. "I can take the five dollars out of the August payment," Chet decided—after one glance at the rowboat in question. He told old Alf to tinker it up and hired another tender for the week.

"Where is the motor-boat that goes along with the *Arcady*?" Chet glanced appraisingly at several likely looking launches tied to the dock. "One of those, is she?"

Old Alf straightened up from stowing our belongings in the hired tender and regarded Chet blankly.

"Jessup's motor-boat? Thet *Hustler* you mean? She's hauled up over longside the ice-house. Been thar all winter. Wuz ye calculatin' to use thet boat, Mister?"

"What's the matter with that one?" I inquired sharply.

Old Alf turned his innocent blue eyes on me. "Wall, she'll need some tink'rin'," was his non-committal reply.

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

Old Alf rowed us out to the *Arcady*, trailing his disreputable flat-bottomed boat for the return trip. Pen and I crouched, silent and excited, in the dinghy's stern, bags and bundles piled on our laps. There was a wonderful salt tang in the air and salt water splashed over the side and wet our skirts. Old Alf pointed out the big yachts belonging to magnates of industry, one of them a famous racing schooner with masts towering against the blue sky and brasses gleaming in the morning sun. A white-jumpered crew were busy on her deck.

"Thar's th' *Sea Loafer*." Old Alf jerked a gnarled thumb over his shoulder. "Biggest houseboat at th' Port. Ben here goin' on seven summers. They got a pianner an' one o' them chefts to cook for 'em."

We looked patronizingly at the *Sea Loafer's* flower boxes and fluttering awnings. We also had a houseboat!

Old Alf's thumb jerked backward again. "Thet's th' *Bigenough*. Took by some folks name o' Hamlin for th' summer. Neighbor o' yourn, she is."

I craned my neck. "That's young Bob Hamlin and his wife—she that was Susan Burroughs," I told Chet. "Don't you remember she is a niece of

FATHOMS DEEP

Amelia Pomfret, on Corey Hill in Brookline? Amelia wrote me Susan Burroughs was married and that the young couple were going to be here at the Port all summer in a houseboat. We must look them up."

"Yep, near neighbors o' yourn," affirmed old Alf who seemed profoundly interested in all summer denizens of his harbor. "Thet's your boat, jest to stabboard o' *Bigenough*. An' thar's Mister Hemingway's *Dixie* to port o' ye. Nice little boat, thet *Dixie*. Shouldn't wonder you leddies'll select to sleep aboard her, 'stead o' th' *Arcady*." (He pronounced it *Our Katy*.)

"Is there anything the matter with the *Arcady*?" I gazed anxiously at Old Alf. (If tender and motor-boat, why not houseboat also?) But we were drawing alongside now and she seemed all right enough. Bigger than I had anticipated, viewed from the dinghy, and sort of long and low and reassuringly substantial in the water. I could envision her, newly painted and with the awnings up, and some pink geraniums along the rail. Our houseboat!

Old Alf was digging in his breeches pocket for the door-key. "Wall, no ma'am, thar ain't anything th' matter with her, so to speak. Guess she's

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

safe enough, fur ez thet goes. Jessup hed her caulked to th' water line; ye might hev to pump some arter rough water. An' mebbe she needs a little tink'rin' here 'n' thar."

He helped hoist our bags and bundles to a small veranda across the stern and chopped away with his short stroke on the oars as Chet inserted our key in our door of our houseboat. You rent a houseboat anchored out in a salt-water harbor and see how you feel yourself!

From the little veranda, or after deck, which had a low bench and an iron framework for an awning, we went down two steps into a sort of living-room—in nautical parlance the aft cabin. This fairly large room had casement windows at either side above cushioned transoms, or bunks—some way above, for the windows were so high you could see out only when standing up, or when kneeling on the bunks. This seemed inconvenient to me until Chet explained it was to keep waves from dashing in at the casements during a high sea. Whereupon I looked thoughtful.

A square dining table was anchored to the floor in the center of the cabin and over the table was a swinging lamp. Two wicker chairs and a moth-eaten rug completed the furnishing. But Byrd

FATHOMS DEEP.

Jessup's cherished ship's clock was on the wall above some shelves evidently intended for books. The cabin would be cosy, I thought, when we had unpacked our rugs, books and cushions; and my housewifely eye noted that the place would be better for a thorough New England cleaning.

Pen was squealing from one of the bedroom-cabins, "Oh, Auntie, do come and look at these cunning cubby-holes."

Cubby-holes they were, opening from either side of a narrow hall that stretched from the large cabin to the front of the houseboat, where two steps again led up to a little veranda at the bow. "Forward deck" Chet called it, but it was plainly the back porch even if it was at the front end of the boat, for it was the kitchen porch. Kitchen and lavatory opened off the hall forward of the sleeping cabins.

"But there's no bath," objected Pen who was racing ahead and peering through doorways.

"Baths overboard," explained Chet cheerily. I glanced out at the sea, beautifully blue all around us. One might get in, for one's morning bath—but how was one to get out? And it looked extremely deep. The bathroom, however, had a faucet with running water and another faucet over the

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

kitchen sink promised easy dish-washing. We found a big tank of fresh water on the roof of the cabin, the tank disguised as a long, low seat.

My bedroom was exactly six-by-six and the bunk under the window occupied six by three feet. "But it is a room all to yourself," encouraged Pen, intent on staving off middle-aged criticism. "You have loads of space, Auntie. You can sit on the bunk to change your shoes. Mine's just like it. Isn't it larky?"

"It's a mercy we are both thin," I grunted. "How Byrd Jessup ever changed his shirt in one of these chicken-coops I can't conceive."

But I took a notion to the five-by-four kitchen—or galley, as I learned to call it. You could stand by the sink and reach the stove with your left hand and the china shelves with your right hand and kick the ice-box door shut with your foot all at one and the same instant.

From back and front verandas steep ladders climbed to the upper deck which was the whole stretch of the cabin roof with a railing around the edge and a low seat following the railing. An awning rolled up to a sort of ridge-pole gave promise of pleasant shade and we found under one of the

FATHOMS DEEP

bunks half a dozen canvas deck chairs and a folding table.

And a flag. A thrilling moment it was when Chet ran up our flag, a yacht ensign as he explained, with red and white stripes like Old Glory but on the blue square a circle of stars around an anchor.

"The good ship *Arcady* is now in commission," Chet announced jovially. "You, Mehitable Havens, and small Penelope here, and your proud brother and father are now yachtsmen. Don't let me hear a land-lubberish word on this craft ——"

"But all the other boats have *two* flags," objected Pen jealously, glancing over the harbor.

"Yacht club pennant at the front—bow, I mean. We'll corral one when I establish my summer membership over at the club."

There have been occasions in my life when I knew profounder happiness, but there has never been a time when I felt more blithe than I did that first half-hour alone on my houseboat, busy with broom and dust-cloth. Chet and Pen had gone off in the dinghy to fetch our belongings. We had made arrangements to store our trunks at the Inn and everything was to be brought aboard in suitcases. Chet and Pen would be busy at that task for an

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

hour or more and I thought it a good chance to do some of the cleaning Adelaide Jessup had neglected. I bustled about, adoring that houseboat already and feeling amazingly at home. The water lapped softly under bow and stern and whispered alongside. The wonderful salty breeze swept straight through from front door to back door and the sunshine, coming in through the casement windows, made oblong patches on the cabin floor. Tins hanging in the galley tinkled faintly. It was ineffably peaceful and restful.

Suddenly in the stillness our ship's clock struck six eager, staccato notes and from yachts all about the six musical notes were repeated. Dust-cloth in hand, I stood in my doorway and listened, my eyes on the blue water and white boats. I drew a long breath of content. Like Socrates I reflected: "How much there is in the world that I do not want."

Chet and Pen returned from their shore trip buried under a mountain of sweaters, blankets, rugs, books, tennis rackets and kitchen utensils. A pile of embroidered towels toppled precariously at the dinghy's bow and the waffle-iron brush was thrust through Chet's hat-ribbon.

Pen flew down the narrow hall that Chet called

FATHOMS DEEP

the dogtrot because it reminded him of narrow passages from front to rear of South Carolina cabins he had seen on hunting trips.

“Aunt Hetty! The Tracys have a bungalow next door to the Inn. You remember Tom Tracy and his sister Elsie at Lake Sunapee last summer. And, Auntie, they know Trix Langdon. At least Tom’s pal at college knows her awf’ly well. Tom Tracy is frightfully thrilled about her coming here this summer.” Pen was unloading the percolator and jars of my currant jelly on the galley stove. “Tom Tracy says there’ll be something doing at the old Port now—if Trix Langdon is around. Some pip-pin she is (that’s what he *said*, Aunt Hetty). He’s coming out to help us get settled ——”

“Looks like we’ll be a center of gaiety on the *Arcady*,” I remarked, storing away jelly glasses in the galley locker.

Pen was back with an armful of bed-linens. “Where shall I put these sheets, Aunt Hetty? Tom Tracy says Trix is a champion tennis player—she has won lots of cups. And she plays the violin like a professional. And she’s a wonderful dancer. Tom says the boys at the Port will be thrilled about her coming; Trix is a peach at petting parties ——”

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

"That will be about enough of that," drawled Chet in the tone that makes our lads at Braceley look sharp.

"But that's what he *said*, Daddy. I'm only repeating ——"

"There'll be no petting parties aboard the *Arcady*," I asserted grimly. "Put those books in the aft cabin, Pen. And, Chet Havens, you go wash your face—you're a sight." What on earth was I going to do with this rampageous creature Leila Langdon had inflicted on me? My blitheness was to be short lived, I foresaw.

Came a shriek from Pen's cabin. "Aunt Hetty! Daddy! Bring a pail—hurry. There's a flood. My bed is soaked ——"

Chet, having turned on the faucet in the bathroom and finding that the water did not run, had scrambled up the ladder to turn the spigot of the tank on deck. Piping from the tank was laid under the ceilings of the bedroom cabins to galley and lavatory forward. The moment Chet released the water those overhead pipes in the cabins behaved precisely as overhead fire-extinguishers in a department store would, when put in action: they simply poured down water on the cabin bunks and on the clothes and household linens piled there-

FATHOMS DEEP

on. Chet raced back up the ladder to turn off the spigot; then he came and viewed the damage.

“I’ll hop in the dinghy and go ashore for a plumber. Take it out of Byrd Jessup’s August payment. What the deuce did he mean, leaving the pipes in such condition? Give me a bucket, Hetty; I’ll bring some fresh water from the Inn. We’ll have to get along without the faucets till the plumber comes.”

Pen and I sopped up the floor and hung the wet clothing out in the breeze to dry. I was beginning to have more respect for that ignored inner whisper of distrust anent Byrd Jessup. Everything of his seemed to require “a little tink’rin’.”

The plumber could not come till to-morrow, Chet brought back word, and I managed to get supper, sternly economizing my bucketful of fresh water and boiling potatoes in salt fluid dipped up from the sea. People seemed to bathe in it but one couldn’t be too finicky. I had called this houseboat adventure picnicking and I resolved to be a good sport. But I thought the Jessups must have had a good deal of company. The cooking utensils were so perfectly enormous. The coffee-pot resembled a lighthouse and the stew kettles had a

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

two-gallon capacity. (I found out the dark reason later.)

We made a merry meal with the folding table set out on our stern veranda which Chet said I *must* learn to call the after deck. He had rigged the awning over it and Pen had spread rugs and cushions on the low seat along the stern rail. The sunset was glorious and I loved the putt-putt of little launches bringing out commuting gentlemen to their yachts and houseboats. The commuters looked so glad to be back from the city and out on the breeze-swept harbor.

The gun boomed from the clubhouse and Chet scrambled up on deck to take down our colors. Then Pen and he got in the dinghy and rowed about, to have a look at the *Arcady* with her anchor lantern aloft. Pen vowed we looked perfectly stunning and too cosy for worlds.

Long after the others were asleep I knelt on my bunk and gazed out at the wonder of it all. Javelins of light cut down into the inky water from the anchored boats. Ripples gurgled under our stern and now and then came a lazy klump-klump of water in the tank overhead. Sweetly solemn strokes of ships' clocks striking four bells came from all about. The ten o'clock trolley moved

FATHOMS DEEP.

away, on shore. And low in the west rode a little lucky moon.

It seemed but a few minutes after I had fallen into a pleasant doze that I started up, terror clutching at my heart.

Burglars!

Right on the other side of the plank between me and the deep was a creeping, surreptitious sound as though a rowboat were being pulled stealthily beneath my window. In stricken silence and with bated breath I lay rigid, listening. I had brought some of the Havens silver aboard, and Chet had his watch and a considerable sum of money. I didn't know whether to call Chet or to get up on my knees and slam the casement shut. The latter would necessitate an arm thrust out of the window—I decided to call Chet.

But further terror paralyzed my tongue. Slowly, horribly, through that window-opening came Something—Something white and glistening: a long, thin, naked arm reaching and groping above my bunk.

One blood-curdling shriek I gave and one mad leap I made, a leap that landed me out in the dog-trot on all fours. But when Chet came running from his cabin he found me back on my bunk with

ON SOCRATES AND SEA-DOGS

both arms out of the window, thrusting at the bowsprit of a sloop which seemed to have drifted down on us. *Possum* was her name; I had noticed her, anchored some distance away, that afternoon.

Chet fetched the broom. We shoved with our might and presently the sloop was bobbing and dipping away from us.

“Why the deuce don’t they tie their boats up?” Chet muttered wrathfully as he sought his blankets. “What was that Byrd Jessup said about glorious sleeps?”

And to-morrow the twins. Well, houseboat life was undoubtedly blithe but you couldn’t exactly call it restful.

CHAPTER V

HINTING OF HOW, WHEN BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD, TROUBLE IS BOUND TO FOLLOW

OF course I expected the terrible Trix to have all the earmarks of the flapper type which had reached the zenith of its apotheosis that summer. But I suspected it would be a more or less innocuous middle-western flapperness, hoydenish rather than sophisticated. Alice Langdon's daughter must at least have had a good bringing-up, and undoubtedly quiet New England people like ourselves would have a subduing effect.

But overnight I had come to a decision. Pen and Trix Langdon could occupy those cubby-hole bedrooms on the *Arcady* and I would sleep in the aft cabin. Chet could go over to the *Dixie* with the boy, Barry. Then I should have that girl under my eye every minute. If she slept aboard the *Arcady* I should at least have something to say about the time she got in nights.

I was up betimes, girdling my bathrobe with a length of rope, since the belt seemed to have dis-

BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD

appeared, and feeling very jolly and nautical as I went aft to call Chet. The eight o'clock gun from the clubhouse must find him ready to dash out and hoist the *Arcady's* colors. It wouldn't do to have the commodore of the yacht club assume that a pack of ignoramuses had come and anchored in his harbor.

Pen, also, had been cogitating about the terrible Trix overnight.

"Maybe I can influence her for good," she remarked with a high-souled expression above her breakfast cereal.

Chet frowned. "Don't talk like a pious little prig, Penny. Whatever you are, for heaven's sake don't be superior. Positively I could trounce you ——"

Pen shrank away, horrified, as with upraised hand her father leaped toward her. I gasped. Was Chet going to strike the child for that insignificant remark? But Chet, springing past Pen, gave a mighty shove against an object, long and white and sharp, that was darting over her shoulder.

It was the bowsprit of that sloop again. She seemed determined to climb aboard.

"Good Lord!" breathed Chet. "Thought it

FATHOMS DEEP

was going to split your head open, Penny. Get the broom, Het. Funny how that boat keeps tagging us."

Presently the *Possum* was bobbing up and down well away from the *Arcady*. "That's curious." Chet peered through a window. "She seems to be anchored after all. How the deuce did she get so close to us? I understood they required a hundred feet between all boats in the harbor. I'll have to see about this."

Directly breakfast was over he hopped in the dinghy to fetch the plumber and Pen elected to go with him. They said they would bring back the *Hustler*. "Maybe," hoped Chet, "I can use her this afternoon when I meet the Langdon twins. A launch is a lot more convenient for running about a harbor. And you will enjoy some trips out to the Sound, Hetty."

They returned with the plumber but without the *Hustler*. She was high and dry, fifty feet from the water's edge it seemed, with a tarpaulin over her engine; but old Alf had promised to hire a helper and have the launch afloat to-morrow. It would cost five dollars but Chet said he would take it out of the August payment.

Delighted to have running water at last, I did

BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD

the breakfast dishes, set the dish-towels to boil and then washed the *Arcady's* windows. I was hanging out dish-towels on the forward deck, feeling very blithe and humming "My bed is like a little boat," the breeze fluttering my apron and the sea whispering at my very doorstep, when there came a plaintive wail from the bathroom.

"The water won't run, Aunt Hetty, and my mouth's full of tooth-paste. Oo-ee, do see what's the matter?"

"It won't run in the sink either." I was hastily trying the galley faucet. "Chet, go see if that tank is stopped up."

Chet leaped up the ladder and lifted the cover of the tank. "Reason enough," he shouted down to us. "Water's all gone."

"Not the fifty gallons?" I cried, aghast.

"Well, it's gone. I suppose a good many gallons fell on the bunks yesterday. What have you been using it for since the plumber went?"

Pen, with a nauseated expression, was mopping out her mouth with her handkerchief.

"Trouble aboard?" sang out the nicest voice I had ever heard. A tall young chap was standing on our stern veranda, holding the painter of his dinghy which trailed at the step. "Bet you

FATHOMS DEEP

have used up your water. We did, the first day—let it run to rinse teaspoons and brush our teeth.”

He grinned at Chet who was hurrying down the aft ladder to see who our visitor might be.

“I’m Bob Hamlin,” the young fellow introduced himself. “From the *Bigenough* over there. Mrs. Pomfret wrote us from Boston to look out for you folks and help any way we could. Sue will be over later but she thought maybe I could show you some ropes this morning. Fact is, I’m on a vacation and what Sue really wanted was to get me out from underfoot.” He smiled engagingly. “Like to try some tennis at the club, Doctor Havens?”

It had been friendly of Amelia Pomfret to write her young people about our coming. Amelia was very fond of her niece Susan in spite (as Amelia had confided to me) of Susan’s self-assured New Yorkish manner, not becoming in a young girl. Steven Burroughs, Susan’s brother, was Amelia’s favorite and he had married a girl after Amelia’s own heart—pretty as a picture and a little lady to her finger-tips. “Real Boston type.” Thus Amelia.

Steve and Bernice Burroughs, Bob Hamlin informed us, were cruising in their *Sorceress* and

BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD

would be at Port Madison later. Next summer Bob and Sue planned to have a cruising yacht also, but Mr. Hamlin being—to the seagoing notions of the family—such a hopeless lubber about things nautical, it had been deemed advisable to train him in, so to speak, on a houseboat.

“I’m coming along fine,” he assured us. “Commute to business daytimes, and evenings”—he chuckled—“splice ropes and study navigation rules. Invariably remember to say for’ard and aft now, and to puff cigarette smoke to leeward. And I can run up an ensign without getting it half-mast.” He leaped to his feet as a stentorian hail came across the water.

“All ashore for i-i-ice.”

“Better hop in your dinghy,” he advised Chet. “Have to fetch out your own ice—nobody else will. There’s the wagon now, backed down in the briny. And bring along a bucket; we’ll get Miss Havens some water from the club.”

The water-boat, he informed us, would be around to-morrow and fill our tank. “But you don’t want to rinse things under the faucets,” he warned. “It isn’t done on boats.” He left a spirit of gaiety and good comradeship behind him. We should like these young Hamlins, I felt sure. I

FATHOMS DEEP

heard him advising Chet as to further maritime customs as they untied their painters.

“If you get a megaphone from the club: ‘Ahoy, *Arcady*. Telephone.’ It means ‘Come ashore; somebody wants you on the ’phone.’ But if they megaphone: ‘Ahoy, *Arcady*. Telephone *for you!*’ It means ‘Friend of yours here wants you to have a drink.’ Get me?”

Chet said he got him.

We had two more visitors that morning. A huge crab walked up the mooring hawser and tried to climb aboard. Pen, squealing, shoved him off with the broom. And young Tracy came out in his canoe with eager offers to be helpful in any way whatsoever, and also keenly anxious about the exact moment the notable Miss Langdon might be expected. He said he was overhauling his cat in case Miss Langdon cared for moonlight sailing. “You too,” he politely included Pen.

Joy-sails, I reflected darkly—instead of joy-rides on shore. Yes, Miss Langdon should room aboard the *Arcady*. And bedtime on the *Arcady* would be ten-thirty.

Chet rowed me across to look at the *Dixie*. Byrd Jessup had sowed seeds of suspicion anent houseboats in apple-pie order but the *Dixie* was a gem of

BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD

a little boat. Her paint was fresh and clean and her plumbing in perfect order, even to a shower in the bathroom. The cabins were done in mission oak and leather with pretty chintz hangings and the galley was dainty with white enamel finish. When Chet saw the comfortable aft cabin he was not hard to persuade. He had speedily discovered he was not going to get much writing done on the *Arcady* where all remarks made on the houseboat could be heard by everybody on board.

Young Tracy helped Chet move his belongings across to the *Dixie* (young Tracy was going to make himself one of the family, you could see that!) and promised to be on hand when the Langdons arrived—to help bring out their luggage.

We expected the twins by a late afternoon train and Chet had planned to meet them at Alf's dock, all correct in his white flannels and blue serge. Real yachting style. But he was tacking tar paper over what looked like a leaky place in the cabin roof, and Pen and I were doing the lunch dishes, when we heard old Alf's croak alongside:

“Board *Our-Katy*, ahoy!”

And there were those twins, three hours ahead of time.

Chet tumbled down the ladder, his disreputable

FATHOMS DEEP

old working pants in unfortunate evidence, and I came hurrying aft, drying my hands on the dish-towel. Nice way for our visitors to catch the head-master of Braceley and his dignified sister who had privately determined to have the Havens greeting convey an impression of decorum that should effectually squelch any expectations of easy-going chaperonage!

The boy, Barry, came up the steps first, shook hands with us and turned to help his sister on board. He seemed a nice boy, fair-haired, frank-eyed, with a good mouth and chin. He wore a loose tweed knicker suit. I liked him at once.

My fond hopes about subdued flapperiness were dashed, however, when the girl stepped on the stern deck of the *Arcady*. I beheld the perfect Metropolitan type. Completely self-possessed and entirely lacking in either youthful shyness or spontaneity. She looked each of us firmly in the eye as she shook hands—one pump at arm's length, laconic flapper style.

The girl's face was powdered, her lips were rouged, her eyebrows were shaved to a thin line. Her skirt fell briefly just over her knees. She had on one of those flapper polo coats, belted low and flaring to the hem of her frock and her feet toed

BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD

straight ahead in almost heel-less strap-slippers. Her hair was bobbed and she wore long green earrings. She carried her hat in her hand.

But oh, she was pretty! She had one of those small, provocative faces, delicately angled rather than thin, her little nose just tilted enough to lend an arch expression, and a rather determined little chin. But the eyes were the feature that held you. Wide-apart violet blue eyes, dark-lashed and set in fainter violet shadows. Those eyes and a pathetic droop of the mouth played tricks with you; they suggested sorrows endured and conquered by a sweet, strong spirit—an absurd illusion when you considered the rest of her. But her smile was gay and winning and the short upper lip made it ingenuous. It transformed the appealing, pathetic expression of eyes and mouth and made you believe that after all she was a merry little thing.

Her profile showed between nose and chin the concave rather than the straight or convex line; a delicate inward curve that always gives a sweet and sensitive expression and suggests the dependent nature rather than the aggressive or domineering one. Without the powder and rouge and the atrocious earrings she would really have been a lovely thing. Chet does not care particularly for young girls and

FATHOMS DEEP

he has always abhorred the flapper species; nevertheless Trix Langdon had not been half an hour on board before he was teaching her how to tell time by the bells, her attitude one of pretty deference and her violet eyes upraised in an effect of hanging on his words.

I was a bit upset about the dog.

While greetings were being exchanged and suitcases carried into the cabin old Alf had croaked from his dinghy, "Forgot this here, ain't ye?" At arm's length he was holding up a small wriggling object. Deposited on the after deck it revealed itself to be a lively, unkempt looking Sealyham terrier with bright, inquisitive eyes under a ragged thatch of hair and a stump of a tail that wagged ingratiatingly.

"Sandy won't be a bit of trouble," Trix assured us. "He's the best little dog ever. Barry will take him ashore for his exercise and he always sleeps on my bed. I hope you won't object." She fixed the winning smile on me.

"Wasn't there anybody to leave him with?" I asked feebly. A dog on the *Arcady*—always underfoot and tracking in sand and salt water on my rugs! Young Barry who was making Sandy sit up and beg to charm Pen, glanced appealingly at me.

BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD

“He’s Trix’s dog. We had to bring him ——”

“Of course he’s Trix’s dog and Trix couldn’t leave her Sandy behind, could she?” The girl caught up the mite and over its shaggy thatch gave the boy a glance so furious that I was amazed. Was she bad-tempered? Or petulant? I do dislike having petulant people about. But her brother took the rebuking glance meekly and said with haste, “Trix and I will see that Sandy doesn’t bother anybody. What Trix says—goes, in our family.” He laughed good-humoredly and the dog, lowered to the floor again, dashed violently up the dogtrot to the galley where several empty milk bottles went over with a crash.

I sighed but resolved heroically to be a sport and make the best of everything.

Young Tracy, in spick-span flannels, arrived with offers of help in conveying luggage across to the *Dixie*, and was introduced to Miss Langdon. She had taken off the polo coat and her slenderness was emphasized by a brief little slip of thin white silk that seemed to have nothing much under it and was belted low on the hips by a strip of patent leather. In that frock and with the nimbus of fair, bobbed hair and the swinging green earrings she was typical of her time and her kind and made our

FATHOMS DEEP

Pen's sturdiness and fresh color look almost countrified. I much preferred Pen's wholesome girlishness but young Tracy's expectations were obviously completely realized. He made ardent plans for diversions ashore and afloat while he and Barry stowed masculine belongings for the *Dixie* in the canoe.

I was putting away some fruit in the ice-box (the twins had fetched a generous basket of melons and peaches from town) and could not help overhearing a conversation at the window of Miss Langdon's cabin. She had the cubby-hole just aft of the galley on the starboard side of the *Arcady* and her brother had pulled the canoe, piled with suitcases and bags, under her window.

"Look here, Sis. What kind of an arrangement is this? Thought you and I were going to be over on that other houseboat by ourselves."

"Well, Barry dear, I suppose she feels it is more proper this way."

"Who? The old dame?"

Here I banged the ice-box door, but busy sounds from the *Arcady's* kitchen were evidently taken for granted. The girl chuckled. "Don't you appreciate the fact that I have to be chaperoned, Barry darlin'?"

BEAUTY STEPS ABOARD

"Piffle. Your brother would be chaperone enough. I'm hanged if I like your being over here without me on the watch ——"

"What are you afraid of?"

"You know darn well it's mighty easy to make slips and spill things. You be careful, won't you?"

"Of course I'll be careful. Don't be absurd, Barry."

"Well, don't forget our plan a minute. And remember how important first impressions are—get me? He's a good scout and the kid's easy. It's the aunt. She's a sharp one, I bet you."

"Don't worry, old thing. Run along. I'll see you at supper. Now don't worry; just leave it to me."

Barry hauled the canoe aft and presently the two boys were paddling toward the *Dixie*. A queer pair, these twins! Had Leila Langdon put it up to the boy to keep this Trix in order? And didn't he trust the chit out of his sight? Or were the two of them hatching some scheme of their own for lurid enterprises this summer?

They'd bear watching—both of them. And Meritable Havens intended to do the watching.

CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING FREUD AND FLAPPERS

JUST in time to save me from nervous connip-tions about supper the water-boat drew alongside. A queer, clumsy craft whose green bulk emerged inch by inch above the sea as her gallons of ballast were surrendered to thirsty yachts and houseboats in the harbor. Heine the waterman was jovial and ruddy-faced and he and his boat were neat as pins. He flung a writhing hose aboard the *Arcady* and his assistant swarmed up the ladder and thrust the end of the hose into our tank.

“Vat you vant,” Heine shouted above the roar of his pump, “is ein cassak—ein hoggesheadt. You keep it astern. I gif you all de vater you vant, same price. Feefty gallon in dot tank not enough for so many peobles aboardt.” He filled all the buckets and kettles the *Arcady* possessed and chugged away, calling back cheerily, “I come negst Monday. You haf ein cassak.”

Young Tracy tore himself unwillingly away. I had made up my mind that five of us were enough

FREUD AND FLAPPERS

for the folding table out on the stern veranda and if the Langdon girl was going to have young men hanging round the *Arcady* at all hours they could go home to eat.

We were a gay party at supper that evening. A brisk breeze fluttered the table-cloth and teacups had to be accurately balanced. All day the wind had been freshening and while getting supper I had discovered the wherefor of the mammoth cooking utensils. I also surmised why the galley was lined and ceiled with asbestos. The combination of oil stove and rocking boat might prove disastrous if shallow saucepans slopped over on the flame. If I hadn't fried bacon at the bottom of a two-gallon kettle and made coffee in the pot resembling a light-house we might have had a conflagration.

Midway of the meal the Sealyham, who had been investigating all over the houseboat, put his paws on my lap, begging for a biscuit.

"Why, his feet are sopping wet." I sprang up, suspecting that the inquisitive dog had knocked something over in the galley. But stepping down into the cabin, I splashed into a puddle of water.

"Chet!" I screamed, lifting my skirts and backing hastily up the steps. "We've sprung a leak. We're sinking."

FATHOMS DEEP

The supper party broke up in confusion. There was certainly a leak somewhere. A pool of water had spread over the cabin floor and as the *Arcady* rocked the water sloshed about. Chet dragged away the rugs and the girls flew for towels to sop up the flood. And I ran out on the stern veranda with some distracted notion of calling for help. "Save the silver" was darting through my brain.

"Trouble aboard?" sang out somebody—and there was young Bob Hamlin, just in the nick of time again. A bundle of green corn was heaped behind him in the dinghy. Little Mrs. Sue had sent it over to me and she was coming to call after her supper dishes were washed up, he explained later.

But in two jumps—when he spied my scared face—he was aboard the *Arcady* and making his painter fast.

"Oh, Mr. Hamlin, we're sinking!"

"Sinking! Great Jehoshaphat!" He dashed past me into the cabin. Chet and Barry had removed the steps and were stooping over a plugged hole in the floor.

"Look at that." Chet pointed furiously. "Byrd Jessup's got a plug stuck in a hole as big as a tea-cup. Thought we wouldn't notice it under the steps ——"

FREUD AND FLAPPERS

“Keep your shirt on, old man. Calm yon fears.” Bob Hamlin squatted down and deftly removed the plug. “That isn’t any leak. Plug’s meant to be there. I been learning things since I took up the nautical life. Got a stick? Here—gimme that umbrella.”

He sank my best blue silk parasol in the aperture, the rest of us watching with bated breath. The parasol went down ten or twelve inches and emerged dripping.

“You gotta pump,” decided Mr. Hamlin. “You see she’s taking in water because of the rough sea. Clear up to your floor level it is. Didn’t you have the boat caulked?”

“Byrd Jessup told us it was caulked to the water line.”

“Well, to the water line isn’t enough when the old boat rolls. Guess you better pump this craft out every morning. Ought not be more than an inch or two of water in there any time—never is on our boat. Looks like it comes in here pretty fast, too. Got a pump aboard?”

Chet delved in one of the cupboards and produced an ancient contrivance that I had taken for a rusty stovepipe.

“I’ll fetch mine,” volunteered Mr. Hamlin after

FATHOMS DEEP

one glance at the contraption. "You better buy a pump to-morrow. You are going to need it on this boat, I'll say."

Chet made a careful memorandum in a small book he drew from his pocket. I knew what he was jotting down:

"New pump. Deduct from August payment."

For the next hour water poured out of the *Ar-eady* into the sea. I decided to measure with the parasol or something every few hours and to send the silver to safe deposit. Chet could buy some plated ware in town.

We climbed up on deck to watch the sunset. It was pleasantly luxurious up there now with the awning spread and low canvas chairs scattered about. Bob Hamlin had brought Mrs. Sue back with him when he went for the pump and I found Amelia Pomfret's niece a very attractive young thing with pretty blue eyes and curly dark hair neat and smart under a net—not bobbed, thank goodness.

But when Chet, Barry and Bob Hamlin lighted cigarettes Mrs. Sue took one as a matter of course, not even glancing apologetically in my direction. Chet politely proffered his case to Trix Langdon.

FREUD AND FLAPPERS

She shook her head. "Thank you, I don't smoke."

"You don't? Why ——" Pen hastily swallowed the rest of it, having caught my eye fixed hard on her.

"Have a fag, Trix," prompted Barry Langdon in a tone that sounded more like command than persuasion.

"No, Barry." She frowned at her brother.

"I don't mind, my dear," I murmured politely and falsely. Pen's eyes were rounded at the celebrated Miss Langdon—who had been suspended from college for smoking.

"Really I do not want one, Miss Havens. I—I am not smoking this summer."

"Sis is afraid of the combined effect of sea-damp and tobacco on her voice," explained Barry. "It isn't because she wants to pose. . . . You've smoked like a furnace for years, haven't you, old girl?"

"Of course." She was stroking the little dog on her knee. "Just sworn off for this summer." Was there something impudent in the glance she shot at Chet? Pleased, no doubt, to shock the New England schoolmaster.

But Chet, whose baritone is the pride of our

FATHOMS DEEP

church choir at home and who is always asked to bring his music when invited out to dinner, was leaning forward with interest.

“ You sing? ”

Barry seemed always answering for his sister. “ Of course it’s the violin Trix is a whiz with. She wouldn’t bring it along. But she has a nice little pipe of a voice too.”

“ My cordial thanks.” His twin smiled sideways under her lashes at Barry and then straightly into Chet’s eyes. And forthwith those two began to talk music in an absorbed undertone. Chetworth Curtis Havens, as I have mentioned, abhors flappers and if ever there was a flapper this Trix was one, sprawled in the deck chair with white silk hosiery visible to the knee and the green earrings swinging below her fluff of bobbed hair.

But flapper or not, no man could have resisted the loveliness of those violet eyes fixed exclusively upon himself. She was a dangerously fascinating little somebody, this Trix. I hoped Chet was not going to become interested in her—he, the headmaster of Braceley School and thirty-eight his next birthday.

Suddenly, above the murmur of our desultory conversation, his voice rose on a protesting note.

FREUD AND FLAPPERS

"But my dear young lady, what do *you* know about Freud?"

Barry sat forward alertly. "Don't try to show off what you thought you learned at college, Trix."

She smiled reassuringly at her brother.

"I know all about Freud. Why not? And I detest his horrid theory of dreams, don't you, Doctor Havens? Abominable, that our dreams—the wanderings of our subliminal selves during repose of our bodies—should be ascribed to the most carnal——"

Her gaze wandered out over the sea, its wind-ruffled surface deep lavender in the sunset glow. A tiny milk-white boat was creeping in, past the Point—homing for the night.

"I've always believed—and always will believe," she maintained, "that dreams have a spiritual significance. You know what Theosophists think: that in dreams the soul partially dissevers itself from the body and holds converse with other souls roaming in a like dream-world. Possibly some dreams may express repressed sex emotions, or repressed fear—as Freud insists—but why all dreams? Why may not some of them be memories of another existence? Or flashes of subconscious knowledge about coming events?"

FATHOMS DEEP.

"What do you think, Miss Havens?" She glanced at me suddenly.

"I—I don't know." I was rather taken aback. This amazing girl might have been expelled by a justly incensed faculty but she had certainly imbibed a few ideas from the college curriculum first.

"Those psycho-analysts ——" I began feebly.

Our flapper snapped contemptuous fingers. "*That* for psycho-analysts!"

Mr. Hamlin seemed amused. "My, my. Now I have a deep respect for their method of digging down into egos and finding the nasty little complexes that have made all the sufferin'. Came near being psycho-analyzed myself once—after a rotten breakdown from overwork ——"

"Overwork!" sniffed Mrs. Sue.

"Yep, overwork. And also because the missus here was gallivantin' with another feller. Before she accepted me, it was. All the world was dark and lonesome and I thought maybe, since my kind of work was really not so hefty for a husky chap like me and the lady was scarcely worth such an amount of emotional strain, some hidden repression of my past, hauled out to face the light, might fetch me back to normal ——"

"Well, it didn't," vouchsafed his spouse.

FREUD AND FLAPPERS

"No, lady. You toddled back before I had a chance to try the psychology stuff. I bought a solitaire with the money, instead."

"I would never be psycho-analyzed." Trix addressed Chet, as one who—now that frivolous interruptions were over—would pay her the respect of serious attention. Of course I could see that Chet was highly amused, and astonished too, at the discovery of a thinking mind under that fluff of bobbed hair.

"To me," she went on soberly, "submitting to psycho-analysis implies self-distrust; a shifting of self-responsibility. Spirit can always conquer—if it is strong enough. I'd rather"—she looked earnestly at Chet—"I'd rather feel I was Captain of my Soul. Wouldn't you?"

"I certainly would." Chet was gazing deep into those violet eyes.

Barry shuffled his feet impatiently. "Oh, can the spouting, Sis. You don't impress anybody. . . . Hey!" he leaped from his chair. "Look at that, will you?"

Soaring and roaring over the water came a great hydroaeroplane. A government experimental station was located further down the bay and the wonderful machine had hovered and dipped above the

FATHOMS DEEP

harbor last evening while we were at supper. So we had become a bit used to it. But the twins were thrilled. Barry rushed to the rail and Trix sat forward in her chair to watch the hydroaeroplane skim the flying spray and then rise, up and up and away into the sunset. Its dark silhouette, rimmed with golden light, hung against the west.

We sat enthralled. The beauty of it . . . the swift flight; the great hovering wings against the sunset glow. Chet whispered:

“Doesn’t it make you think of—of——”

“I know,” Trix Langdon caught his thought.
“You mean The Skylark.

“In the golden lightning
Of the setting sun,
O’er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an embodied joy whose race is
just begun.”

The loveliness of her speaking voice attested her trained ability to sing. I saw Chet regarding her curiously. He could not reconcile that voice and the profound reflections he had been treated to with outward and visible manifestations.

And neither could I.

FREUD AND FLAPPERS

"What do you think of them, Chet?" I asked him later when we had a moment alone together on the *Arcady*. Young Tracy had brought his cat-boat alongside and the four young folks had gone for a sail. The Hamlins had departed for their *Bigenough*.

"The boy is a blunt, straightforward chap, I'd say." Chet was lighting his pipe in the lee of the cabin bulkhead. "Typical cock-sure sophomore type. Trim down some in his junior year and make a first-rate fellow ——"

"And the girl?"

"Not so easy." Chet smiled as he flung his match overboard.

"You think she's posing?"

"Well, maybe she wants to make a bit of an impression on the New England schoolmaster and his cultured relative." Chet chuckled. "But the child has a mind—and a soul too." He was silent a moment, seeing again perhaps as I was, the girl's little face uplifted to the sunset while she quoted Shelley's exquisite lines.

"She's pretty, Chet."

"She would be—if she'd wash her face, old dear. I shouldn't take her too seriously, Hetty. Don't forget the little dickens has somewhat of a reputa-

FATHOMS DEEP.

tion. She'll begin to sustain it sooner or later, shouldn't wonder."

Chet sat down under the cabin lamp and got out his notes for the treatise on Simple Synonyms for Elementary Grades.

I fervently hoped the "crowd," as young Tracy had hopefully christened our foursome of young folks, would be back early since I had to sleep in the mess-cabin and could not retire to rest until all hands were aboard.

CHAPTER VII

RELATES HOW, HAVING INVADED HOSTILE WATERS, IT
IS UP ANCHOR AND AWAY

A FRIGHTFUL detonation roused me from deep and dreamless sleep, and my eyes flew open to a dazzling glare. I had a panicky conviction that a submarine or something had exploded directly beneath us. Then I realized that the glare was sunlight streaming through the high window and that the horrific noise must have been the eight o'clock gun at the yacht club. The drowsy motion of the *Arcady* and the strong salt air had made me oversleep.

I sprang out of my bunk and cast an anxious eye at the cabin floor over by the steps. We had not sunk overnight anyway and no more water seemed to be coming through that bung-hole. The sea was glassy and smooth and it looked like a fine day. There was no sign of life on the *Dixie* and I foresaw it was going to be my job, mornings, to put up colors; those men would never get over early enough to do it.

FATHOMS DEEP

Indeed flag-hoisting, I observed later, seemed to be a privilege accorded to the ladies, for quite a number of kimonos and coiffure-caps appeared hastily in cockpits after the matutinal boom of the gun.

Our yacht ensign draped over my arm, I toiled up the aft ladder and my eyes coming level with the deck discovered a little huddled up figure in the lee of the water-tank. It was Trix Langdon, sitting cross-legged on the floor, her big polo coat over jade silk pajamas. She greeted me cheerily.

"I've been up here almost an hour. Isn't it wonderful? The white boats gleaming out of that sort of amethyst mist and the breeze so fresh across the water. And those little tenders darting about. That gun was for flags to go up, wasn't it?" She sprang to her feet. "Let me help you."

"You poor child," I exclaimed, when after some fumbling with the ropes we had run up the *Arcady's* ensign, "you must be starving."

"Hungry as a bear," she acknowledged. "But I'm used to being up long before breakfast. I love morning, don't you, Miss Havens? Things are so fresh and clean—a new beginning somehow. I'm coming up here every ——"

"Here is my brother." I sent a crisp glance at

UP ANCHOR AND AWAY

the nether edges of the jade pajamas and as Chet came scrambling up, apologizing for his tardiness, the girl shot down the forward ladder with some gay remark about her negligee. But I thought her hurry was because she hadn't her war-paint on. In the morning light and without the absurd earrings and over-red lips she had seemed older—not aged in years exactly but less arrogantly flapperish. I should have taken her, sitting there watching the harbor, for twenty-six or seven at least. That wan look in the morning light, I decided grimly, was probably the result of dissipation.

It was the perfect flapper, however, who came out to breakfast. Fringed sport skirt to the knee, knitted slip-on with narrow belt tumbling over the hips in the ridiculous slouchy way they are wearing belts now, bobbed hair fluffed to the semblance of an agitated mop and bound across the forehead with amber silk, topaz earrings to match skirt and headband. And a morning face that must have cost considerable, with cosmetics so high-priced.

Breakfast was hilarious. Chet had taken Sandy ashore when he went for the cream and Sandy, offended at a floating mooring, had made a flying leap for the thing. While hauling the dog back to safety Chet had lost the cream bottle overboard.

FATHOMS DEEP.

Sandy was now drying out in a sunny spot on deck while over creamless coffee discussion waxed hot as to relative ranks aboard the *Arcady*.

Chet was elected commodore of our fleet—represented by the *Arcady*, the *Dixie*, the *Hustler* and the two tenders. I established my right to be skipper of the *Arcady*, in which case, Pen declared she was naturally first mate and squabbled violently with Barry who insisted that position should be his.

“No, sir, you are the crew,” decided Chet, breaking his second egg and flipping the shell overboard—one of the prime joys of house-boating. Over the side they go: chop bones, olive pits, banana peels, and that’s the end of them. My family took such pleasure in pitching remnants of food over the rail that it was difficult to conserve the makings of a *réchauffé*.

“What’s the crew do?” inquired Barry suspiciously.

“Oh, he hops in the dinghy and goes for milk. And for ice. And for the mail. And for a pound of butter. And he fills and trims the lanterns and puts ’em up at sundown. And sweeps cigarette ashes off the deck after young Tracy has been here. And works the pump—when we get one ——”

UP ANCHOR AND AWAY

"Lazy life I'll lead this summer," the crew murmured.

"Exercise, my boy—best thing in the world for you. I'd do it myself—just for the exercise—if I didn't have to write a book. And besides, manual labor is not fitting for a commodore." Chet seemed in high spirits this morning. He turned to Trix.

"What special job shall we give you?"

"Trix," Barry grinned mischievously, "ought to be deck-steward. She's so handy around an ice-box, you know."

His sister flushed and looked annoyed. "That's rather horrid of you, Barry Langdon." Then she smiled at me in her winning way. "Maybe the skipper here will find me handy around the dish-pan, which is more to the point. . . . Let's begin now, Miss Havens, and clean up these breakfast things."

And to my amazement she proved as good as her word, polishing glasses meticulously and even rinsing out her dish-towels when she was through.

"I adore pottering in a kitchen," she confided to me, hanging the wet towels on a rack in the galley window. "It's fun to have a home and do things yourself in it—'nestling round' I always call it. But of course my work gives me little time ——"

FATHOMS DEEP

I was offering the mascot (which rank had been conferred on the Sealyham) a saucer of creamless cereal. I straightened up and looked at the girl.

"Your work? Are you teaching too?"

The dish-towel she was adjusting slipped off the rack and fell to the floor. "Company coming!" She laughed as she stooped for the towel. "No, Leila is the only teacher in the Langdon family. Trix is supposed to have a musical career, you know; that means hard work too. Now I am going to lend Pen a hand with the bunks. We can take one of the tenders and go over and tidy up the *Dixie*."

"I do believe, my dear"—I tried not to seem surprised about it—"you are going to be a real little help to me aboard."

She met my glance with those serious violet eyes of hers. "I hope so, Miss Havens. I'm going to try."

Later, when I went aft, I found Chet giving her a lesson in tying the dinghy's painter. There's a sort of seagoing knot that holds fast in a gale but slips loose at a touch of your finger. I never mastered that knot though I tried all summer. I always tied the dinghy the way father taught me to hitch a horse to a post, a perfectly good knot that

UP ANCHOR AND AWAY

a breeze couldn't pull loose—if a horse couldn't. Chet's brown head and the girl's fluffy bobbed head were bent over the complicated knot and his hands were hovering over hers as she struggled, red mouth set in a firm line, to acquire the trick.

"I never give up"—she jerked the end of the rope free and began all over again—"once I have made up my mind to conquer a thing."

"So saith your chin." Chet looked at the feature referred to, his eyes twinkling. "It's a terrible little chin. Doesn't go with those blue eyes at all ——"

"You don't like my chin?"

"I didn't say I didn't like it. I implied that I feared it. The chin of one who rules, it is; and in my professional capacity of schoolmaster I resent any other ruling influence around me ——"

"Schoolmasters mean nothing to me." She tossed her bobbed head and the topaz earrings glittered. Then she glanced up under her lashes.

"But I do stand in awe of a commodore."

If that lifted glance of hers wasn't intentionally provocative I hadn't learned a thing in all these years of guarding Chetworth Curtis Havens from determined manœuvres of the ladies. I did hope she was not going to try to flirt with Chet.

FATHOMS DEEP

But just then Barry appeared with young Tracy in tow and the rope lesson had to be abandoned. The young folks departed for the club and Bracey's headmaster rowed across to the *Dixie* for a secluded session with Simple Synonyms for Elementary Grades.

During luncheon the indefatigable *Possum* made another attempt to climb aboard. Yesterday's breeze had kept her taut on her mooring but over to-day's smooth water she came curtsying toward us and was so persistent about hobnobbing with the *Arcady* that it required the commodore's and crew's united strength to drive her off.

Chet declared he would go over to the club immediately after lunch and register a complaint. "I hate to do it—just taken in as a member. Seems bad taste to start off by making kicks. But that infernal sloop is going to do us some damage: stave in a window or bash one of us in the head. Where's my yachting cap, Hetty? I'll go right now ——"

"On board *Arcady!*" (So close alongside it made us jump.)

The club launch drew in at our step and two pleasant-faced gentlemen clambered out and asked if they were speaking to Doctor Havens.

UP ANCHOR AND AWAY

"It's about the *Possum*," explained one of our visitors. "Sorry, but you are running into her ——"

"Running into her!" Chet stared. "Seems to me she's running into us. I was just coming over to speak about it."

My goodness, it was a mercy he hadn't. When we learned the dreadful truth Chet was horribly mortified.

"You see," Captain Meadows of the club was extremely courteous, "your *Arcady* is the only boat in the harbor that has a rope mooring. All the others have chains. A chain sinks to the bottom and comes up gradually, but a slack rope floats. That's why, as the tide falls, your houseboat wanders out of bounds and gets over into the *Possum's* anchorage. There is danger of your moorings fouling each other and making bad trouble when the tide rises. Mr. Byrd Jessup—ahem!—should have given you people a chain mooring, but since he did not—well, I am afraid, Doctor Havens, we must ask you to let us move you ——"

"Move us where?" I demanded with some indignation.

"Well, say a hundred yards further down. Other side of the *Dixie*. There's an open space

FATHOMS DEEP

there and you won't run any risk of ramming another boat even with your rope mooring."

I looked without enthusiasm at the location indicated. "But there is such a pleasant view here, right in front of the club ——"

Captain Meadows smiled at me. "Yes, Mr. Byrd Jessup picked out a pretty fine spot for you. One of the best in the harbor, I may say. Commodore Ritchie's yacht has had this place for several summers. She's back there to port." He pointed to a superb black schooner some distance out in the bay.

Chet interposed hastily, "Of course we will move, Hetty, and at once. I had no idea we were interlopers, Captain Meadows. And please believe that I know nothing about ropes and chains and the troubles you mention." Poor Chet's face wore a painful flush but he smiled his pleasant smile at our visitors. "We are just back-country landlubbers, you know, Captain. We would not willingly make ourselves a nuisance in this harbor—I hope you believe that."

I have never seen Chet Havens so angry and upset as he was after those men had gone. "I'd like to wring Byrd Jessup's neck," he said wrathfully. "Anchoring us in a place reserved by courtesy for

UP ANCHOR AND AWAY

the commodore's yacht! And hitching us to a rope that floats all over the harbor. Suppose I had gone over there to-day and made an ass of myself by complaining. Great Scott!"

It is always the beautiful privilege of us women-folk to offer beams of sunshine in moments of masculine storm. "You can take the moving expense out of the August payment," I reminded Chet.

So next morning found us early at mess, the commodore in his oldest pants and a khaki flannel shirt, keen for departure to less troublous waters. The crew jovial and obviously hoping against hope that some misadventure would add zest to the journey. The skipper apprehensive about her glassware and the contents of the ice-box. And the deck-steward calm and efficient over the business of preparing breakfast.

That girl was a marvel. Things seemed to get themselves done under her capable little hands and you would have thought her years older than Pen, the way Pen flew about at her direction. Under that bobbed mane of Trix Langdon's there seemed to be a deal of common-sense and balance. I made up my mind that if she had been wild and unmanageable it had been due not to inherent shal-

FATHOMS DEEP

lowness and irresponsibility but to some streak of perverseness in her make-up.

Promptly at four bells (which by this was four bells to me and not, through painful process of calculation, ten o'clock in the morning) old Alf appeared with a bleary-eyed assistant whom he called Ed. They brought a flat-bottomed scow in which was set up a sort of windlass. Inch by inch our mooring emerged from the sea. There seemed something shocking and almost immodest about dragging our anchor from its couch in the sands and thus exposing it at mid-season to the light of day.

Then began our snail's progress in tow of Ed's scow. I need not have worried about my glassware; majestically we moved away, the mascot barking frenzied farewells from our front veranda, and that choice location in front of the clubhouse was offended by the *Arcady* no more.

From the new anchorage we viewed a high sea-wall above which was an abandoned stone quarry. But as the commodore optimistically pointed out, the trees on the hill back of the sea-wall were restful to the eye and on the other side we had a beautiful stretch of bay unencumbered by anchored yachts.

UP ANCHOR AND AWAY

Old Alf came aboard to collect his five-dollar moving charge (which Chet jotted down in that memorandum book of his) and mentioned that if we thought of buying a chain mooring he knew where we could get one cheap.

"But we are not likely to run afoul of any boats down here," objected Chet. "What's the matter with the rope mooring now?"

"Wall, a chain's better," allowed old Alf cautiously. "All the boats hez chains. Better git a mushroom anchor too. I cud pick ye up a mushroom cheap."

These luxuries, it appeared, would total up to around fifty dollars and Chet thought that sum would strain Byrd Jessup's August payment, already heavily taxed, rather too far.

"The rope and anchor we have are *safe* enough, aren't they?" I inquired of old Alf.

"Yep. 'Les' th' rope gits sawed through by a broken bottle on th' bottom. Ropes hez been, now an' ag'in. An' mushrooms'll hold better in a big blow. But likely you'll git along."

Chet decided to take a chance on our rope and anchor. We were a good deal more worried about water coming up through that bung-hole than we were about possible encounters with submerged

FATHOMS DEEP

bottles. As Chet remarked, the bottle season was over.

But it all shows what pathetic lubbers we were. If ever you rent a houseboat in a salt-water harbor, never mind the wicker chairs and awnings and the cunning galley and the nice soft bunks; just make sure that out of sight, below you in the shifting sands is a good dependable mushroom tethered to a chain.

CHAPTER VIII

PROVES UNSUSPECTED KINSHIP BETWEEN PEDAGOGUES AND JAZZ

"THOSE crosspieces look pretty slim," I criticized, glancing over the socks I was darning at the flimsy contraption upon which I was expected to trust my hundred and sixty pounds when descending into the vasty deep.

Chet was building a swimming ladder so we womenfolk could take our morning dip overside. He was hammering at the ladder and whistling cheerily, and Trix, curled up in a deck chair, was watching him work. Barry and Pen, accompanied by the mascot, had gone off after lunch to see if our paint had arrived. I had given up the idea of flower-boxes (fresh water was too precious to sprinkle on geraniums) but the painting we should have to do.

Trix stretched luxuriously in the deck chair and curved slim arms above her head.

"Oh, but it's heavenly here."

FATHOMS DEEP

"You like it?" Chet stopped hammering and smiled at her. "Gay enough for you, is it?"

"Plenty gay." She smiled back. "This gorgeous deck with the awning, and the *Arcady* just rocking lazy-like, and that shady green hill over there beyond the blue water . . . it's heavenly for a tired person."

"You—tired. You don't know what it is to be tired, young lady. Now if you were the jaded headmaster of seventy unruly boys, relaxing for the first time in months a grip it took every ounce of your personality to keep tight enough; yet not so conspicuously tight as to make sneaks or rebels of the young demons—you might comprehend something about dead-beatness."

"It is hard," agreed Trix, her lovely eyes full of understanding and sympathy. "But of course the new methods of training help a lot. Studying pupils scientifically, I mean, with psychological classification through the mental tests. Have you ever read Terman's 'Measurements of Intelligence,' Doctor Havens?"

Chet sat on top of the water-tank, hammer drooping from a paralyzed hand, and stared at her. I have never seen anything funnier than his expression at that moment.

PEDAGOGUES AND JAZZ

Then he grasped the hammer, drove a nail precisely and shot a question at her.

"Tell me; what, exactly, do you understand by this term, 'motivation' as used so extensively just now by yon scientific educators?"

In two minutes they were deep in a discussion of abstruse pedagogic problems. I caught such high-sounding phrases as "test-grouping inimical to democracy"; "modern administrative methods"; "obnoxious system of part-time work in city schools." Now of course Trix Langdon had heard her sister Leila discourse upon these subjects and the girl was smart and imitative. She was repeating, parrot fashion, some of the pedagogic patter she had listened to. Nevertheless it was remarkable that a feather-headed little pleasure seeker like herself should be able to speak intelligently at all on such highly technical matters.

Watching her as she sat there, eyes so attentively on Chet's, her whole attitude so composed and earnest, I could almost forget the bobbed hair and earrings and artificially emphasized lips. The pity of it! This girl, but for the perverse, frivolous streak in her, had the makings of worth-while womanhood.

Suddenly Trix started up in the deck chair.

FATHOMS DEEP

"Listen. Isn't the club calling you, Doctor Havens?"

We had become so used to the blare of the club megaphone over our harbor that we seldom paid any attention. Now I realized that for some minutes past the stentorian hail had been coming in our direction.

"*Arcadee-ee-ee*. Telephone."

Chet flung down his hammer and hurried to the aft ladder. Barry and Pen had taken the *Dixie's* tender, leaving the *Arcady's* dinghy tied astern. Chet had stipulated that one tender must always be available for those remaining on board. He jumped into the tender and called back to us:

"Anyhow it's only 'telephone'—not 'telephone for you'—so I shan't kill myself getting there."

I explained to Trix the amusing significance of the second call but I saw she scarcely heard me. She had left her chair and was leaning over the rail, following Chet's progress to the clubhouse, and there she stayed until we saw him returning. I thought there was an anxious expression in her eyes.

Sure enough, when Chet had made fast the dinghy and climbed the deck ladder, "The call was for you," he told her. "Somebody name of Rossi-

PEDAGOGUES AND JAZZ

ter. I explained how long it would take to row back here and get you to the 'phone so he gave me the message."

Her eyes narrowed. Was it consternation in her little face? Suddenly she looked older, the bearer of responsibilities.

"This Rossiter chap said to tell you he is called out of town and cannot attend to that matter this week. He said you'd understand ——"

"Yes."

"And that you were not to worry. Things are going all right. There promise to be no difficulties. He expects to be back in New York by Friday the fourteenth.

"He added last thing," reported Chet, "that you are not to worry."

Trix had been listening closely, her gaze on some distant fishing dories. She turned her eyes to Chet and there was an inscrutable expression in their violet depths.

"Thank you," she said. And immediately went below to her cabin.

Chet glanced at me under quizzically raised eyebrows.

"Flapper affairs." He shrugged and picked up his hammer.

FATHOMS DEEP

My dark reflection was that it sounded like somebody getting ready to manœuvre a divorce. *Everything going all right. No difficulties anticipated.*

“I’ll tell you what I think,” was my audible reply to Chet’s facetious comment. “I think that girl is deep—fathoms deep.”

But that evening when the two girls came out of their cabins ready for the yacht club dance, nobody would have dreamed Trix Langdon had a care in the world. The Hamlins had dropped over in their tender to pick up our girls, and young Tracy was standing by with his canoe to take brother Barry along and introduce him to Port Madison maidens. So seven pairs of eyes contemplated the celebrated Miss Langdon, ready for the ball.

And she was worth looking at—if you fancied the current mode. To me, Pen in her little corn-color organdy that she had worn at Braceley commencement prom and with her dark hair coiled neatly against her fine head was an infinitely more engaging sight.

Miss Trix was wearing a very brief frock of some clinging, glittering stuff that had so little under it every outline of the lissome figure beneath was revealed. The longest earrings yet dangled under her

PEDAGOGUES AND JAZZ

bobbed hair and she carried a mammoth fuchsia colored feather fan. The frock was modestly cut at the neck in *jeune fille* fashion but it left her arms bare, and they as well as her face were paste-white with some cosmetic, her lips vividly red as her fan.

I saw Chetworth Curtis Havens looking at her. Well, she was an alluring spectacle. No live man could have helped looking at her.

I had run into Pen's room to find her tulle scarf when I heard the twins talking together in the aft cabin. Barry's voice had an irritated note.

"I never heard such bally nonsense. Of course you're going. You do beat the limit for foolishness. D'ye want to put the kibosh on the whole show?"

"I'm going, Barry—don't get so excited. I only said I'd a lot rather sit here on deck with Doctor Havens and Miss Hetty. I don't feel particularly enthusiastic about fox-trotting round with those boys. . . . Listen, Barry. Syd Rossiter called up to-day. Doctor Havens went over to the club and got the message."

"The deuce he did! What'd Rossiter say?"

"Oh, he was careful; nothing they could understand." Her voice dropped so low her next words were inaudible.

FATHOMS DEEP

"Well," asserted Barry, "he said it was all right so why fret yourself? No dissatisfaction and everything arranged the best way. For Pete's sake throw it off a little and cut out the worrying. You'll queer the whole game—after all our trouble ——"

"I know, Barry, but I don't feel like dancing. Couldn't you go alone?"

"Course not. Look here, old girl, you got to play up. And the tennis too. You played like a hobby-horse yesterday. Can't you put a little more pep in it?"

"I'll try, Barry, but you know it isn't easy." (Did her voice tremble?) "You know Trix ——"

"Trix is going to live up to her tennis reputation or I'll have something to say. See here; two chaps at the club were chinning about you yesterday; I heard 'em, changing in the locker-room. One of 'em said: 'Not so lurid after all. Might be any nice girl of twenty-two. Maybe it was some love affair took the ginger out of her.'"

They were moving toward the after deck. I heard Trix, preceding her brother through the door, fling back at him:

"Well, wasn't it?"

So that was it. The little thing had had an un-

PEDAGOGUES AND JAZZ

happy love affair. It explained a lot; her indifference to young Tracy's plans for light diversions; her preference for the companionship of us older folk who would not expect of her any difficult keeping up with a much advertised reputation for vivaciousness. The poor little girl! Very probably Leila had hoped that the novelty of this water life might help Trix get over the affair. Could the man be the Rossiter person who had called up to-day? Had Leila forbidden Trix to see more of him and was the girl, with her brother's connivance, planning to get in touch with him this summer? Ought I write Leila that this Rossiter was in communication with the younger sister at Port Madison?

"No French heels in this dinghy," Bob Hamlin was calling. "Tuck those silver shoon under your arm, Miss Langdon. Sue's in her tockie-feet so you needn't mind."

They looked very jolly as they rowed away from the *Arcady*. Trix glanced up over the fuchsia fan at Chet who was smiling down from the stern rail.

"I wish you were coming too."

He laughed. "I'm too ancient, young lady. What would Braceley think of its staid headmaster galumphing round to a saxophone with you youngsters?"

FATHOMS DEEP.

The boat was too far away for her to answer but she continued to smile back at Chet until the tender was swallowed up in the dusk.

About eleven o'clock he shuffled his papers together.

"Going over to the *Dixie* for something," he told me.

In fifteen minutes he was back, inquiring from the tender, "Any letters to go ashore, Hetty? Something important here I've got to mail to-night. Won't be long."

I stepped out on the stern veranda. The moon was almost full and the harbor was a silver mirror shattered by golden spears of anchor lights. From the clubhouse drifted syncopated measures of that abominable jazz which young folks trudge (not float) to, nowadays.

Somewhat sarcastically I demanded, "And do you have to put on your best white flannels and change your shirt to mail your important letter, Chetworth Havens?"

"Thought I would look in and see how our youngsters are getting along," returned my brother a bit sheepishly. "Penny might feel more comfortable to have me there."

I sat on deck listening to that trudging music till

PEDAGOGUES AND JAZZ

after midnight. But it was three bells in the morning and I was snug under my blanket when I heard Chet and Barry call gay good-nights from the tender and the two girls, giggling together, tiptoed through my cabin.

CHAPTER IX

WHICH TREATS OF HOLIDAY MAKING IN ARCADY

"Now that we have Proudly with us I feel a sure-enough yachtsman and no interloper in this harbor," was Chet's Sunday morning observation over his grapefruit.

"Proudly?" The rest of us looked interrogatively at our commodore.

"Yes—don't you remember:

"Proudly our pennant greets the dawn . . .

Just hoisted Proudly at the forepeak. Fetched her out from the club last night."

Of course all hands had to rush through the dog-trot and out on the bow deck and there crane necks to gaze aloft.

"Well," I commented as we resumed our seats at table, "Proudly won't greet any dawns if I have to attend to it; the eight o'clock gun is plenty early for me."

Chet seemed in unusually high spirits that morning. I thought the exercise at the club last evening

HOLIDAY IN ARCADY

must have done him good. Trix, Pen confided to me, had taught Daddy to fox-trot. "They seemed to be having a wonderful time, Aunt Hetty, and Daddy was jolly as any of the boys and looked so young in his white flannels and nice brushed-back hair."

"So Trix had a good time at the dance, dearie?"

"I should say, Aunt Hetty! The boys cut in on her dances every minute; and lots of the married men too. She had a frightful success." (Pen, at the adjective age, was now going through the "frightful" period.)

All that Sunday, most of Monday and from early morn to dewy eve of Tuesday—the triple holiday that occurred that summer—we had a crowd aboard the *Arcady*, and if I sat down once I don't remember it. The glorious Fourth was gloriously celebrated in our harbor. All the yachts were dressed in gay bunting. Phonographs blared "The Star Spangled Banner," and on shore forbidden fireworks and corks popped in valiant demonstration of our nation's freedom in the matter of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Our anchorage was invaded by excursion craft,—“rough-neckers” Barry called them. Shabby looking power cruisers that made no boast of awnings

FATHOMS DEEP.

or club pennants but whose cabin-tops had rails to keep babies from rolling overboard. These unengaging boats chugged as near alongside as they dared and their occupants (mostly in shirt-sleeves and suspenders) peered interestedly in at our windows. No matter how naturally modest and democratic you have deemed yourself, you certainly have that superior feeling, on your own boat with the proletariat crowding around but not able to discommode you.

Triple holidays, however, are trying on housekeepers. Theirs the work and little of the play. All hands except Mehitable Havens (who had dinner to get) went in swimming and they did look delightfully cool, splashing about alongside. The new swimming-ladder was put in use and Chet flung overboard the big life-buoy that was one item of the nautical equipment of the *Arcady* in apple-pie order. The buoy, attached to a long rope tied astern, was for the special benefit of Pen who is not a strong swimmer.

Trix in a bathing suit of black jersey was even more alluring than Trix in a dance frock. She had dispensed with stockings and the short swimming trunks did not pretend to cover her knees. A violet silk kerchief knotted over her rubber cap just

HOLIDAY IN ARCADY

matched her eyes. She came out of the cabin, darted across the stern veranda and made a flying leap, cutting the water in a beautiful dive. Then she was off and away, young Tracy after her.

Chet watched a bit anxiously until the two waved to us from a yawl anchored some distance from the *Arcady*.

"Hang on to the buoy, Penny. You're all right," he shouted. That wave of theirs had been a distinct challenge to such a splendid swimmer as Chet. I was shelling peas in the galley when I heard Pen scream. The child was struggling in the water, clinging to the buoy, and that Sealyham was on her shoulders, clawing at her hair which he had torn loose from her cap. To his uncontrollable desire to pounce upon anything floating in the sea Pen and the buoy had been too urgent a temptation. But poor little Pen was in real danger. She was shrieking frantically, trying to keep her head above water.

Just as I was about to spring overboard, clothes and all, I saw Barry coming with long strokes and shouting commands to the dog. He shook off the frenzied animal, spoke reassuringly to little Pen, got his arm round her and with the other arm pushed the buoy to the ladder, swimming with his

FATHOMS DEEP

legs alone. In two minutes Pen was trembling on deck and Barry was wiping away her hysterical tears, calming her with a gentleness I should never have expected of the boy.

I had not cared a great deal about Barry Langdon, in spite of my first pleasant impression, for he seemed to me to bully his sister in a most uncalled-for way. Chet, who bunked with Barry on the *Dixie*, was enthusiastic about the lad's good qualities; his straightforwardness, his sunny temper and his determination to help his sister Leila after college fun was over. But to me Barry's evident desire to exploit Trix and to hold her to her reputation for recklessness was anything but admirable.

Now, however, his tenderness with little Pen revealed another side of his character. "She's all right now ——" he patted Pen's shaking shoulder. "Wouldn't have believed she was such a good swimmer. No need to worry about *her* going over-side with the bunch after this. Now, Penniwinkle, you get some dry duds on and I'll fetch up that dratted dog."

Thereafter when anybody went swimming from the *Arady* the mascot was tied to the leg of the ice-box and the galley door was shut on him,

HOLIDAY IN ARCADY

his howls, yelps and whines of protest continuing until splashing in the water outside had ceased.

My new regard for Barry was increased later in the day when I heard him sympathizing with his twin about the tennis tournament. They had lost their match and I knew the boy was chagrined about it. Everybody at the club, so young Tracy had informed us, had been certain the famous Langdons would walk off with the cup.

"I'm sorry, Barry dear," I heard Trix say. They were up on deck where Trix had collapsed in a canvas chair. Pen and young Tracy were at the other end of the deck but the voices just overhead floated down to the galley where I was wringing out pillow-slips. (The men, after their swim, had changed in Pen's cabin and had, of course, left their sopping wet suits on her bunk.)

"You couldn't help it, old girl. You did your best and were mighty plucky to stick it out. I could see you were all in. You put up a darn good game."

"But not good enough for the expert Miss Langdon," she sighed regretfully. "We find the pace a bit stiff this summer ——"

"Forget it, Sis. You're doing fine. Take off my

FATHOMS DEEP

hat to you for a corking sport. Look here; are you going over there on Friday?"

"To N. you mean? Don't you think I'd better?"

"Yeh, guess so. Won't do to have any dissatisfaction in that quarter. Things seem to be going O. K. but I'd run over. Give you a holiday for a few hours too."

I heard her laugh. "It *has* been a bit of a strain, but you can't say Trix hasn't been a hit. Even Leila's got to be proud of her."

Barry laughed too. "Good old Leila. Well, Leila's in a safe place for a while. Expect to see Rossiter when you go in?"

"If he's back." She dropped her voice then and began to whisper earnestly. I heard Pen and young Tracy coming across the deck.

So those two were engaged in a secret enterprise that they intended to keep from the older sister! I had suspected as much. And it was something connected with the Rossiter person who had telephoned. Trix was going to N. (New York of course) to meet him, and Barry had some interest in the matter beyond casual sympathy with his sister's love affairs.

Leila Langdon had put the children in my charge and I intended to find out what scheme they were

HOLIDAY IN ARCADY

cooking up together and if necessary communicate with Leila. I shut my lips firmly as I began to peel peaches for supper. Trix was fascinating and Barry had ingratiating ways but neither one of them was going to pull the wool over Mehitable Havens' optics.

Yet every time I hardened my heart toward that girl she did something to soften it.

Dog-tired after three days of holiday making, with the place a mess of wet bathing suits, tennis rackets and sloppy foot tracks on the rugs, I was trying to whip my flagging energies into getting supper for eight. The Hamlins were coming over and Chet had carelessly invited young Tracy to join us. I had a nagging headache from two days of muggy weather and incessant work in the galley and for the first time was feeling uncomfortably the rock and dip of the *Arcady*. I was upset after my fright about Pen. I was worried about the Langdon twins and the measure of surveillance my responsibility demanded. And I was fretted about the water supply. Pen and Barry had been making lemonade at intervals for the crowd on deck and the only fresh water remaining was a gallon I had secreted at the back of the broom closet for use at supper.

FATHOMS DEEP

With flushed cheeks and rather shaky hands I was mixing a batch of biscuit when the mascot, dashing up the dogtrot to welcome Chet and Barry just coming aboard all spick and span for supper, knocked over my kettle of precious water which for just a moment I had set on the step. Then and there the skipper's nerves snapped. She sank on the step, dabbing at her eyes and assuring high heaven she was t-too discouraged to live; she d-detested houseboats and wished th-this one were at the bottom of the sea and she was b-back where water ran d-decently from faucets.

Chet stared in dismay at this weeping creature who had once been his serene and capable sister. Barry seized the water pail and dashed for the tender.

Thereupon, out of her cabin, fresh as a rose in crisp organdy and with the green earrings twinkling saucily under her fair bobbed hair, stepped Miss Trix Langdon.

"Deck-steward's taking hold now, Skipper." She took me by the shoulders and pushed me gently down the dogtrot. Then she untied my apron and whisked her slimness into it. "You are to go into my cabin, lady, and lie down for one half-hour and shut your eyes. And then you are to slip into your

HOLIDAY IN ARCADY

nice cool cross-bar lawn (I've hung it in there for you) and have your supper without daring to get up once from the table ——”

“But my dear ——”

“Along wid ye now. Don't you suppose your handy deck-steward can do a turn in the galley? You just lie still and forget everything ——”

“Where's Pen?”

“Never mind Pen. If I need help I'll call for it. It won't be the first meal I have gotten—not by a long sight.”

She had lowered the awning so a cool green light filtered into her cabin and her determined little face smiled down at me as I sank gratefully on her bunk and closed my eyes.

“Some biscuits,” sighed Mr. Hamlin later, buttering his seventh.

“Bob, you know you are on a diet,” Mrs. Sue warned crisply. “You promised when you had to punch that extra hole in your belt you would give up starch ——”

“Sure,” agreed her husband soothingly. “Haven't I worn soft collars a whole week ——”

“Yes—even at the yacht club dance you did.” She reached across and captured the butter dish.

FATHOMS DEEP.

“How’d you like to be henpecked the way I am, Havens?” Mr. Hamlin sent an aggrieved glance at the confiscated butter. “Lucky dog, you. That chap, Thoreau, says, ‘Most men live lives of quiet desperation.’ Didn’t occur to me when I read that in my care-free college days, but now I realize Henry must have been married when he wrote that line.”

Chet did not join in the general laugh. He was watching Trix Langdon. In her big apron, slender arms balancing the iced-tea pitcher, she was an amazingly different person from the girl in a spangled dance frock who had smiled provocatively over a fuchsia feather fan.

“Where did *you* learn to cook bluefish and wear aprons?” I heard him whisper as she filled his glass.

“Leila taught me. Do you like it?”

“You bet I do—and the girl who wears it.”

“I meant the bluefish.” She had slipped into her place between Chet and me and was sipping her iced-tea. The food on her plate was untouched.

“But I didn’t mean the bluefish,” Chet whispered. “I meant the little girl who was all used up after her tennis finals yet realized Hetty was more used up than she was ——”

HOLIDAY IN ARCADY

She shook her head, smiling downward at her plate. And then I saw that her eyes were swimming in tears. Remorsefully I realized how tired the little thing was, and a bit hysterical, probably, because of her tiredness. Suddenly she laid a hand on Chet's arm and a hand on my arm, looking through the unshed tears at one and then the other of us.

"You have both been so—dear to me. I only want you to like me a little even if you do disapprove of Trix. Oh, I can see! But you'll never be sorry you helped me this summer. It—it means a lot more to Leila than either of you ——"

"Trix!" Barry slid round the table and tapped his sister on the shoulder. "Steady on, old dear. Tired, aren't you? Pen and I are going to do the dishes. . . . Make way, you mascot, here's where the crew and the first mate wrastle pots and pans in yon galley."

And with a terrific clatter of crockery, peals of youthful laughter, and much hilarious effort of Mr. Hamlin in the matter of hauling up buckets of sea water for the dishpan, the holiday came to an end.

CHAPTER X

HOW CONTRABAND CARGO IS BROUGHT ABOARD AND TRUCE IS DECLARED BETWEEN ADVERSARIES

"I TELL you to get ein cassak," rebuked Heine the waterman. "Too many peobles on boardt for feefty gallon. You haf dot cassak neggst time I come."

Pen and Barry departed directly after breakfast to scour Port Madison for casks and I attacked my breakfast dishes with that supreme content that gallons sloshing about in the tank overhead give to any houseboater. Chet had been for the mail and had brought out for Trix a thick envelope bearing a Maine postmark. I thought I would let her enjoy her budget from Leila while I tidied up. Coming down the dogtrot with fresh water for some wild flowers Pen had fetched aboard, I heard a dismayed exclamation in the cabin.

Chet was staring at Trix who sat at the table scrawling messages on post-cards. What had called forth Chet's gasp of protest was her eyeglasses.

TRUCE DECLARED

They were not the ugly but picturesque shell-rimmed spectacles that youth affects, but handsome gold-mounted oxford glasses with a black ribbon depending from one of the lenses. They gave the child a comical effect of middle-aged dignity and poise, oddly at variance with the bobbed hair and earrings. She stared at our blank faces, flushed and put up a hasty hand to remove the glasses. Then she dropped the hand and gazed at us solemnly through their lenses.

"Surely *you* don't have to use eye-glasses to write post-cards," remonstrated Chet.

"You object to my glasses?"

"Take 'em off," implored Chet. "You look like a schoolma'am."

"You don't care for schoolma'ams then?"

"Not in vacation time." The headmaster of Braceley made a grimace of deep repugnance.

"What a lucky thing Leila didn't come instead of Trix. Leila's a schoolma'am, you know."

"So she is—and I've no doubt a very estimable person. Hetty here considers that young lady a paragon of all the virtues. But"—he smiled at her—"personally I consider it a lucky fate that sent Trix and not sister Leila."

At this I slopped over some of the water I was

pouring into the flower jug. Why, oh why, had I not made a point of having Leila visit us at Braceley last year?

There was a twinkle in the blue eyes behind the preposterous glasses. "You prefer frivolous flappers then—in vacation time?"

"What do *you* think?" Chet leaned over and deftly removed the offending oxfords. And whispered (I presume so sister Hetty should not hear such foolishness), "That's more like our pretty little girl again. Don't try to make me think those pansy eyes need glasses."

Pansy eyes. I marched up the dogtrot and jerked my broom off its nail. From that minute I began to worry about Chetworth Curtis Havens.

Of course she was flirting with him and how was I going to prevent it? I had been the one to get her aboard, and here she was for all summer. If I had dreamed a girl like that, with bobbed hair and a reputation for college joy-rides—a chit just past twenty—could ever attract my brother Chet she would never have stepped foot on the *Arcady*.

Of course I was not selfish about old Chet. I had hoped many times that, bereft of so much by that early loss, he would marry again. That is, I had always fondly believed I hoped so.

TRUCE DECLARED

When the right woman should come along. I had envisioned her: gracious, lovely, finely bred, perfect in manner and in taste, with intellectuality tempered by charm—the admirable mistress of Braceley House. Now an upsetting vision of this girl, earrings, brief frock, flaming fan and painted face, beside Chetworth Curtis Havens at commencement receptions rose before me. What would the Braceley pupils say to her? What—good heavens!—would the trustees say to her? That Chet Havens would ever look at a bobbed-haired flapper with anything but tolerant amusement would never have entered my head.

But he *was* looking at her.

That the girl was fascinating I had to admit. She fascinated even me, because of her unaccountable contradictions. And she had little ways that were hard to resist; quick kindly perceptions, impulses of helpfulness. But she had a secret. There was something I could not quite trust about this Trix Langdon.

When I returned to the cabin she was explaining to Chet that her eyes had been strained over music scores and since there had been no time to consult an oculist before leaving Pittsburgh for the summer, she had borrowed an old pair of Leila's eye-

FATHOMS DEEP

glasses that seemed to relieve her vision when she was doing close work.

Of course Chet was appalled that the pansy eyes should be thus endangered. He was going into town that day to interview a parent who contemplated placing his boy at Braceley, and he insisted that Trix go with him and have an oculist prescribe proper lenses.

They were discussing this plan when a shrill whoop off to port made us hurry to the after deck. A strange procession was approaching. First, Pen and Barry in the *Dixie's* tender. Trailing astern, an ancient motor-boat with the mascot howling lonesomely at its bow. And some distance further astern a bobbing object that resembled a mammoth, sleek black porpoise turning over and over in the water.

"Hooray," cheered Chet. "The cassak."

The unpromising looking *Hustler* having been tethered to our outrigger, the "cassak" was, by strenuous exertion of Chet and Barry, hauled and pushed into place on the aft veranda where forevermore it gave the *Arcady* a rowdyish list to port.

It was no cask but a hogshead of such size that I had to crane my neck to see into it. And a strong and intemperate odor assailed my nostrils.

TRUCE DECLARED

"Where did you get it, Barry Langdon?"

"Well, we got it—didn't we, Pen? We thought it would hold plenty of water; no more worry for you, Miss Hetty ——"

"It has held plenty of whiskey—and not so long ago either," I commented. "A nice object to have on board the *Arcady* in prohibition times. If there's a wind blowing toward shore we shall have the revenue officers out here."

"I intend to brush my teeth every hour," decided Chet hopefully. "A whiff's as good as a smile, these thirsty days."

Within the cabin Pen was exclaiming, "What stunning post-cards! Whose are they?"

Trix, turning quickly, hurried into the cabin and began to gather her writing materials together. "Just some Maine views," she explained. "Leila sent me a lot to look over. I have been writing on some Port Madison cards this morning—those we found at the drug-store, you remember, Pen."

Several of the cards had fallen to the floor and I stooped to recover them. It did seem curious, I thought, as I shuffled them together, that Leila should send a dozen of the same view.

Pen was tugging at her pocket. "Daddy, I'm going to town with you to-day. I have a letter from

Goldie Dunlop. She is with some cousins on her way to the Adirondacks and they are at the Gotham for a day or two. Goldie wants me to come over."

"I don't know why not." Chet smiled indulgently at his little girl. "Trix is going too—to have her eyes examined. While she is at the oculist's and I am interviewing my paternal prospect you can visit with Goldie. And we'll all have dinner somewhere."

"But I want Trix to come with me and see Goldie," objected Pen. "You know Goldie Dunlop, Trix—your friend, Muriel Dunlop's sister. Goldie knows you are here and is crazy to see you ——"

"Is she coming out here?" Trix, on the way to her cabin with the post-cards, stopped short and looked at Pen.

"I hope so. They are just starting for Fourth Lake now but we will persuade Goldie to visit the *Arcady* later on. . . . What's the matter—don't you want her to come?" For Trix looked anything but enthusiastic.

"Oh, of course, Penny. It will be fine." She went into her cabin and closed the door and I presumed she was addressing her post-cards in peace and quiet for she did not come out until lunch time.

TRUCE DECLARED

Barry and Chet spent the morning tinkering happily over the *Hustler's* engine. "We'll have Bob Hamlin look her over; maybe he can tell what's the matter," Chet was remarking when, hot and grimy, they came aboard for a minute before repairing to the *Dixie* for a swim. On the table afterward I found a greasy paper, weighted down by a monkey-wrench. The paper held some notes in Chet's neat, precise hand:

Memo. Get magneto, carburetor, spark-plug, pump-packing, bearings, gaskets, piston rings, oil can, pair pliers and charge to J. out of August payment.

Trix came to lunch still in her linen middy.

"But, Trix," expostulated Pen, "we have to catch the two o'clock trolley."

"I've changed my mind about town, Penny. It's so beastly hot and I'm sort of tired after that tennis yesterday. Think I prefer a deck chair and a novel. You don't mind, do you?"

"But, Trix, Goldie will be frightfully disappointed ——"

"Why should she? She's your chum, not mine. She will enjoy you a lot better all by yourself. Anyhow I really don't feel like that trip to the city to-day."

"I can't see," pouted Pen, "why you have changed your mind so suddenly."

Neither could I. She had been keen enough about it this morning when Chet proposed the trip. Did she resent Pen's being taken along as a third, or was there some reason why she did not want to see the Dunlop girl? Chet looked disappointed too but he promised to bring Trix some chocolates and begged her not to read through those glasses of her sister's. (Worrying about the pansy eyes of course.)

Instead of seeking deck chair and novel the exhausted Miss Langdon insisted on washing the lunch dishes and then professed eagerness to accompany me ashore on a marketing jaunt. Barry had gone to the club with young Tracy so we set forth alone in the dinghy, market baskets beside us and the mascot, exuberantly joyful, tied to an oar-lock.

And really I had a most pleasant afternoon with that girl. It was astonishing what good company she could make herself for a woman twice her age. In fact we had a distinctly larky time. We stopped at the drug-store for ice-cream sodas and then went to the post-office where Trix said she must mail back Leila's post-cards. While she was purchasing stamps the long envelope slipped from a package of

TRUCE DECLARED

outgoing mail she had thrust under her arm and fell to the floor, and as I stooped to pick up the fallen envelope I noticed that it was addressed, not to Leila in Maine, but to some person in Newark, New Jersey.

I wondered who it could be in Newark that Trix Langdon knew intimately enough to be sending her sister's post-cards to. If she had close friends in Newark it was odd that I had heard nothing about them. But she took the envelope from me without remark and dropped it down the mail chute. It was little secretive ways like that about her that provoked me so. I forgot the incident, however, in the ensuing struggle with our dinghy.

To avoid the long walk up the hill from the dock, we had beached the dinghy on the sand in a cove nearer the town and when we returned to the boat we found it high and dry, abandoned by a falling tide. Over the business of hauling that dinghy back into the water, our baskets of potatoes, beefsteak and celery balanced on the thwarts and the mascot yelping and nipping at our ankles, we got into such a gale of laughter you would have taken us for two girls together. It had come on to rain—a melancholy drizzle—and soaked, and still giggling, I huddled in the stern holding the shivering mascot

FATHOMS DEEP

with one hand and a bottle of cream with the other while Trix pulled at the oars.

Wet to the skin, my feet in a pool of water, I reflected on what an old sea-dog I was getting to be. That's what salt-water houseboating does to you—makes a good sport of you no matter how you were brought up.

Trix drew alongside the *Arcady* and shipped her oars.

“Go on a little further; you're at the bow end,” I directed.

Trix looked hard at the *Arcady*. “But how could she be swinging, stern to the breeze?” Her mouth opened as she stared at our domicile. “Miss Hetty, for pity's sake, who put the flags up this morning?”

The skipper had of course, I responded. Who else on board the *Arcady* was ever dressed sufficiently to go aloft with colors when the eight o'clock gun boomed?

Trix sat doubled up in helpless mirth. “B-but look at them, Miss Hetty. L-look at them. They are hind-side-before.”

The awful fact had dawned on me at that same moment. Proudly our pennant streamed over the *Arcady's* stern rail, and the yacht ensign jauntily

TRUCE DECLARED

floated from the bow. It was astounding that none of us had noticed. Probably everybody else in the harbor had and it would be many a day before poor Chet heard the last of the joke.

Not such an old sea-dog as she had thought herself—Mehitable Havens, who hastily scrambled up the deck ladder to reverse those flags.

The post-cards mailed to Newark recurred to me while I was getting supper. Looking out at the rain and reminding myself to have Barry put an umbrella in the tender when he rowed over to meet Pen, my eye was caught by some bits of cardboard floating past the galley window. Trix was out on the bow deck and I knew she must be emptying her scrap basket overboard (one of the easy housekeeping arrangements of water life) for the pieces of cardboard, afloat for a moment, were sections of one of Leila's Maine post-cards. I recognized the picture of pine trees along the edge of a lake.

A big ink-blot defacing the picture showed why the card had been destroyed and in that blot and in the scribbled words that filled the space reserved for a message I recognized also the purple ink Pen had bought by mistake at one of the Port Madison shops.

Why was Trix, at Port Madison, writing mes-

sages on Leila's Maine post-cards? And afterward sending the cards to a Newark address instead of back to her sister in Maine?

It was too much for my puzzled mentality—I gave it up. Some joke on somebody probably, and anyhow none of my business. As Trix came into the galley to get the table silver I remarked abstractedly:

“I wish I knew Leila better.”

“I wish you did,” answered Trix wistfully. “You’d like Leila, Miss Havens. She’s more your kind. You’d *approve* of Leila.”

“Don’t you think I approve of Trix?” I was beating eggs strenuously.

“Well,” her eyes twinkled as she picked up the spoons, “I think you ha’e y’r doots. You are not quite certain, are you, that Trix is a safe pal for Pen?”

I kept the egg-beater whisking. “And is there any particular reason Trix shouldn’t be a safe pal for Pen?”

Her lips curved in a smile I did not like; an ironic, provoking little smile. “I really do not think you need worry about Pen, Miss Havens. Nobody I know of would willingly do harm to little Penny ——”

TRUCE DECLARED

“How about doing harm to Trix?” I inquired tartly. I suppose I was getting back for that smile which had seemed ever so slightly to jeer at me. And I rather expected some quick, semi-pert retort. When it did not come I glanced at her, reaching for my nutmeg grater.

She was looking out of the window at the rain-lashed sea. Her gaze was very far away and very sober.

“All the harm that could be done to Trix is already done,” she whispered. “We pay for our mistakes, Miss Havens. Trix is paying for hers and—and Leila is paying too.”

CHAPTER XI

TELLS OF ONE WHO VENTURED ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE

ON Friday the fourteenth I woke up trying to recall what special event was scheduled for the day. Something vaguely connected with anxiety, it seemed to be, but just what I could not remember.

It was going to be a warm day anyhow and one of those muggy ones too. As I looked out at the sleek, still sea I suddenly decided this was a splendid morning to try that swimming ladder of Chet's. The others had been going up and down it for a week without mishap and if it had held big Barry it would probably hold me.

Trix liked to take her dip before breakfast and several times I had been wakened by her dripping progress up the ladder and across the deck overhead. She always jumped off the bow and returning by way of the swimming ladder aft, crossed over the cabin-top to the forward door in order to reach her own room without coming through the aft cabin where I slept. She had many such considerate little ways. My heart had softened to the

ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE

child since that afternoon of our marketing jaunt and her wistful words concerning my probable preference for Leila. And if her peculiar remark at the end of our afternoon together had rather disturbed me, considering Chet's growing interest in the girl, the tale Pen told me upon her return from town explained the bitter way Trix had spoken about herself.

The story Goldie Dunlop had related to Pen was a sad one—if it was all true. Trix, according to the Dunlop girl, had been engaged to a young Pittsburgh chap—or everybody supposed they were engaged, for they were inseparable in spite of Leila Langdon's pronounced disapproval of the affair. The young man had more money than was good for him, had been leader of a fast crowd at college, and was foremost in all the extravagant enterprises of a wild younger set at the country club. Trix and he scoured the environs of Pittsburgh in his powerful racer, shattering speed laws and coming home at outrageous hours. But to the older sister's protests Trix retorted that she was of age and knew her way about and that Leila was an interfering mid-Victorian old maid.

It seemed to me that Trix had changed a good deal and her arrogance had been somewhat

FATHOMS DEEP

chastened, or else just now she was posing for the Havens' benefit, for truth to tell, I had seen little evidence of this insolent self-assertion. But the Dunlop girl, whose sister Muriel had visited the Langdons in Pittsburgh, vouched for Trix's unruly behavior and had been at the house when the tragedy occurred.

There had been a Christmas dance at the country club and Trix and her young man had disappeared at midnight. At two o'clock when Barry and Miss Dunlop were ready for home the pair had not returned. Leila, alarmed when Barry and the girl appeared without Trix, had waited up until three—and four—and five. Then she had roused Barry. But Barry had no idea where to begin looking for his twin. It was snowing hard and if Trix and her escort had taken refuge anywhere from the storm it seemed strange that the girl had not telephoned her sister. Leila Langdon (and this clearly revealed, to me, her distrust of the younger girl), had hesitated to call up friends round about and thus spread the story of Trix's absence.

And then, at dawn, Trix was brought home. The car had skidded in the snow, run off an embankment and overturned. Trix had been unconscious

ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE

when pulled from under the machine. The young man was dead.

Shock, and grief about the boy's death, so said Goldie Dunlop, had made Trix Langdon very ill. When she was able to talk about the affair she asserted they had driven over seventy miles, had had engine trouble and had been obliged to crawl through the snow until they found a garage; and then, speeding on the last stretch in order to get through town before dawn should overtake them, the car had skidded. All this Leila had written to Muriel Dunlop who had returned home immediately after the accident.

Small wonder Trix Langdon was softened and subdued this summer. That awful experience might well have sobered the most arrogant spirit. Nevertheless, I reflected grimly as I twisted my hair tight before donning the swimming-cap, Trix Langdon was not exactly wearing herself out with grief at the present moment. Last night, for instance, it had been past twelve when she and young Tracy had come back in the sailboat. There was no moon this week and neither Chet nor I could see any sense in drifting about on a pitch black harbor. Chet had stayed on the *Arcady* all evening, consulting his watch and at intervals peering out over

FATHOMS DEEP

the water from the after deck. But when young Tracy's boat drew alongside at fifteen minutes past midnight all Chet said—smiling at Trix's properly conscience-smitten face—was:

“Four bells is the extreme limit for evening sails from the *Arcady*, young lady, unless somebody takes special pleasure in keeping the skipper here out of her bunk. She can't turn in, you know, until all hands are aboard.”

I was thinking all this over as I got into my bathing suit. I listened at Trix's door but thought she must be still asleep for I heard the mascot stir and whimper. Anyhow that dog was safely shut in. I knew if he ever leaped on my back when I was ten feet from the houseboat I should never be able to reach the swimming-ladder.

It took nerve to back down that ladder all alone, with the vasty deep creeping up my feet and ankles and knees and hips. But the water felt warm, accustomed as I had been to the stinging cold of the sea off our Massachusetts shore. I looked up at the morning sky, shut my eyes tight and let go. Presently I began to enjoy myself. A few strokes, I found, would take me any time to the comforting security of the ladder, and oh, how fresh and buoyant the water was out here! I grew more daring

ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE

and swam alongside the *Arcady* until I reached the bow where I bobbed up and down on the mooring rope, gazing complacently about the harbor.

And there, sixty feet away, dangling bare legs from the bow of the anchored yawl, were Chetworth Curtis Havens and Miss Beatrice Langdon.

Talking earnestly they were, the sun, peeping above the hill of Port Madison, glistening on their wet bathing suits and on Chet's brown head. I remembered that Chet, also, liked to take his dip before breakfast and usually came aboard the *Arcady* with sleekly brushed wet hair.

So this was what Miss Trix was up to; stealing across the cabin-top mornings not to disturb the last nap of sister Mehitable. Very canny of them too, to take their swim in a direction not overlooked by the cabin windows and after deck.

Suddenly they spied me clinging to the *Arcady's* mooring rope, and leaping from the yawl they came toward me, brown arms digging into the morning sea.

"This is the life," greeted Chet jovially as they drew alongside. "Bully for Het. Getting to be a regular fellow, she is. Never thought you'd be sport enough to try it all alone, old lady."

"No," I snapped, "I guess you didn't." I turned

FATHOMS DEEP.

and paddled back to the ladder. But there was no use letting Chet Havens know I was irritated—that never does any good with a man. I smiled at the pair of them as I wrung out my skirt. “All hands aboard in twenty minutes for breakfast. And, Chet, now you are here you might run up the flags. There goes the gun at the club.”

Trix came out to breakfast a little late—and all dressed up in shore togs, even to an absurd hat of orange brocaded silk cocked over one eyebrow and matched by topaz earrings.

And then it came to me like a flash: Friday the fourteenth was the day the Rossiter person was to return to New York.

In plain duty to Leila Langdon I felt I must make some kind of protest. “I don’t like to have you go to town all alone this way, Trix,” I ventured. “Wait over a day and let us plan. I need more linen for my lunch doilies and Pen wants some of that new periwinkle blue wool for another sweater. We could all go in together to-morrow.”

Trix smiled at me with a firm look about her chin. “I’d love to go with you and Pen another time, Miss Havens, but there is some business I have to attend to to-day. Don’t worry about my going alone, please. I am accustomed to running

ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE

about New York by myself, you know. I always stopped over to shop, going back and forth while I was at college. . . . Barry, I shall get the nine o'clock trolley if you will row me across."

Thus gently and with perfect courtesy did she make my well meant interference seem intrusive and unreasonable.

Chet mentioned he would put her ashore in time for the trolley when he went over to get the mail. At that Barry opened his mouth to protest but Trix's head gave an infinitesimal shake. I should have missed it but for a flash of sunlight on her earrings. But while Chet was bailing out the dinghy she conferred with her brother in the cabin.

"Shall you see Rossiter?" I heard him say.

"At the McAlpin."

"Blow you to lunch, I suppose. You have all the luck. Wish I could go ——"

"It isn't any special treat, Barry, for me to see Syd—the way things are."

"I know that, old thing—but you get your little perquisites. And Syd certainly thinks a heap of you ——"

Just then Pen happened to go into the cabin for something and the twins backed a little way up the dogtrot. Trix, realizing I must be in the galley,

FATHOMS DEEP.

carefully lowered her voice (she had not learned as I had what remarkable acoustic properties the *Arcady* possessed) and continued to talk earnestly with her brother. Suddenly her voice came clearly, raised in remonstrance.

“But I simply won’t go sailing with him again.”

“What happened? The cub didn’t try anything rough, did he? I’ll knock his block off ——”

“No, he didn’t, silly. Tom Tracy’s only a boy and I can take care of myself anyway. Just idiotic petting stuff I mean, but I’m not going to stand for it—it bores me.”

I heard Barry laugh. “Oh, that! Well, hang it, a kiss or two from a nice kid won’t hurt you in a good cause. Tracy’s a godsend I’ll say. Harmless guy and a mighty valuable asset. Don’t be so up-stage, old dear.”

“Well, I won’t go sailing with him again unless you manage to be along.”

“All right. I’ll stick around if you’re so fastidious. . . . There’s the doc calling; better hustle.”

A good cause. Now what good cause could be served by that girl’s putting up with young Tracy’s lovemaking against her taste and inclination? Was Barry seeking to push her into a summer

ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE

flirtation, believing it would keep her from brooding over the grief of last winter? If such was Barry's light opinion of indiscriminate spooning I had better be careful about trusting Pen out of my sight with him. He seemed to have a queer code—even for a sophomore—this young Barry Langdon.

I was rinsing out dish-towels in the galley when a dreadful suspicion flashed across me. That "good cause" Barry had hinted at—could it be a conspiracy of the Langdon family to corral for the junior Miss Langdon the perfectly eligible Doctor Chetworth Curtis Havens?

Had Leila Langdon sent the twins to summer with us with deliberate motive at the back of her head? After all, despite the friendly Christmas letters, I knew Leila Langdon not at all. Fair words and lofty sentiments have been known to cover manœuvring intent. Getting Trix settled and off her hands would be a big relief to Leila Langdon who was teaching in order to put Barry through college. And undoubtedly if Chet was attracted, as I began to think he was, an affair with young Tracy would give a fillip to his ardor.

But somehow I could not doubt Leila Langdon. After all, if troubled about the new affair of her sister's with the Rossiter person, Leila could not

FATHOMS DEEP

be blamed for innocent matchmaking hope in throwing young Trix into close association for ten weeks with a man Leila knew to be fine and desirable in every way. If there were any dark schemes underway (upon which references to "good causes" had a bearing) they were schemes hatched up by that incalculable pair, Barry and Beatrice.

But that there was some secret purpose of the Langdon twins that made this visit to Port Madison more than the simple desire for a summer by the water, I was now certain.

Trix had told us she would return by a late afternoon train and Barry hung around all afternoon, pretending to be busy painting the *Arcady*, but ready to hop into the dinghy and forestall any intention of Chet's to meet the trolley. Barry was half-way over to the club float when the six o'clock car rumbled down the hill, and instead of coming directly out to the *Arcady* the twins let the dinghy drift while Trix talked and her brother listened intently. Whatever her business in town had been, he was eagerly concerned about it.

And the business must have gone satisfactorily because Trix was in high spirits when she came aboard. She said she was glad to get back to the harbor and the *Arcady*. New York was hot and

ASHORE WITHOUT LEAVE

dusty and dreadful. She had brought candy for Pen and some beautiful cream linen for my doilies.

“And I have a sample of that periwinkle blue worsted you wanted, Penny.” As she rummaged in her preposterous beaded hand-bag for the bit of yarn a scrap of paper fell to the cabin floor.

Pen picked it up and stared at Trix.

“Why, whatever took you to Newark?”

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH OUR SKIPPER, ROAMING UNCHARTED
SEAS, HEARS CIRCE SINGING

PEN, handing over the oblong of paper—a return ticket for the tube ride from Newark to New York—looked frankly curious. I must speak to Pen. Her New England training should have restrained her from blurting out her thought that way.

But Trix, tucking the ticket in her bag, seemed not at all disconcerted. “I saw an advertisement in the newspaper about some coats at a Newark shop. Wonderful bargains they sounded, so I ran over to look at them. But the material was poor so I came back by the ferry to have the cool water trip instead of riding in that stuffy old tube.”

Now it is a pretty long way round, from the Newark shopping district and with the tube station almost at your elbow, to travel by trolley and train to the Hoboken ferry. I looked speculatively at Trix—and I saw Chet regarding her rather curiously too. But of course it was none of our business what took the younger Miss Langdon to Newark—bargains in coats or something more confi-

CIRCE SINGING

dential; or why she who dwelt on water seven days in the week should go so far out of her way for a five-minute ride on a ferry-boat.

And I noted that instead of pitching the now useless ticket overboard she had put it carefully back in her bag. More trips to Newark in prospect? Suddenly I recalled the envelope with the Newark address that Trix had dropped in the post-office. Since nothing about acquaintances in Newark had been volunteered I had of course not desired to seem inquisitive.

But I imparted some of my anxieties to Chet that evening. The young folks were singing together at one end of the upper deck. Bob Hamlin and Sue had rowed over and young Tracy had brought his guitar. They were all shouting a rousing chorus when, at the top of the forward ladder, I intercepted Chet. He was coming up with an extra wrap for Trix.

"Ever hear the story of the old Irish woman in the smoker, Hetty?" Chet asked solemnly, after listening to my agitated outpouring anent Newark return-tickets, mysterious envelopes and potentially dangerous Rossiters. (I did not mention young Tracy and his connection with the "good cause.") If you suspect a girl is trying to annex a male rela-

FATHOMS DEEP.

tive you are not quite such an idiot as to put the notion into his head.)

I said: No, I hadn't heard the story of the old Irish woman in the smoker but what had that to do with it?

I could see Chet's eyes twinkle in the light of the swaying anchor lantern. "Well, the conductor came through and found the old lady putting a match to her pipe. Said he timidly, 'I think you are in the smoking-car, madam.' Said she, looking him firmly in the eye, 'Oi am. And it's a dam' foine man attinds to his own business.'"

Suddenly Chet started. "Whose voice is that?"

From the other end of the deck came the swinging chorus:

There's a long, long trail a-winding
Into the land of my dreams . . .

and young Tracy's guitar was twanging out the accompaniment in fine style. Above all the voices rose one, a rich mezzo, clear and full and exquisitely trained. It led the other voices and after they had ceased held the final wistful note.

Applause and "bravos" came from near-by yachts, and "Sing it again" one masculine voice demanded.

CIRCE SINGING

“Trix Langdon!” I moved up into the circle with Chet. “I never knew you could sing like that. Why haven’t you sung for us before?”

She laughed and made room for Chet beside her. “Maybe for the same reason Doctor Havens hasn’t, dear lady.”

Chet had said to me at the beginning of our houseboat summer, “If I forget and start warbling, Het, remind me not to, will you? My old pipe has about arrived at the time of life when it better not be exercised out in the sea damp. I’ll give it a rest this summer.” And Pen must have repeated his remark to Trix.

But that voice of Trix Langdon’s was too much for Chet. As a magnet to the pole was he drawn to its possessor and all his musical enthusiasm, put to sleep for the summer, was instantly awake.

The yacht off to starboard, assuming a share in the evening’s concert, set a phonograph going, and presently when *Tales of Hoffmann* drifted across the harbor Trix and Chet sang together, their voices blending in the lovely harmony of the *Barcarolle*. On the rocking boat with soft lap of the sea along side and twinkling reflections of anchor lights all about us in the black water, that duet was a thing of perfect beauty. None of us moved for several

FATHOMS DEEP

seconds after it was over. Then came vociferous clapping from the yachts all about.

"Won't you sing something?" Trix turned to Chet. "Please."

"But how about an accompaniment?" hesitated Chet. "I don't believe Tom's guitar could manage offhand—without the notes, I mean, of course, old chap."

"Don't let that worry you," young Tracy made answer to this delicate apology. "Couldn't read notes if I had 'em. They'd cramp my style. Just swing in by ear. But maybe ——"

"Here you are." And as though waiting for this cue Bob Hamlin dug under his chair and neatly produced a violin case. With a flourish he deposited violin and bow in Trix's lap.

"Thought perhaps the expert Miss Langdon would consent to give us a treat if somebody brought along a fiddle."

Trix took up the instrument, not as you would expect a violinist to, with knowing, loving finger-touches, but almost as though she were terrified of the thing.

"Where did you get it?" she demanded of Bob.

"Oh, I came by it honest. And it's no slouch of a fiddle either. You see, way back in my lace-collar

CIRCE SINGING

age fond parents thought it would be romantic to make a virtuoso of me so they had me take lessons. But I was a hopeless dub at it and they had mercy on the world and bought me a baseball-bat instead. Sue, here, got wind of those kid lessons of mine and she had an idea music in the home was good dope for keeping hubbies in nights, so she presented me with yon Stradivarius last Christmas as an encouragement."

"But she changed her mind," reported his lady, "the first time he tried to pick out a tune. And the mean shop wouldn't buy it back."

"So here it is," declared Bob genially, "for little Miss Trix to make some real music on."

"Oh, I couldn't." Trix thrust the violin back into Bob's hands. "Barry ——!"

Her brother stood up suddenly. "Listen, folks —no kidding, Trix doesn't want to play the violin this summer and she has a good reason. If you knew what, you'd realize it's mean to nag her about it. Anybody who does is being inconsiderate in a mighty unkind way."

There was an uncomfortable little silence. Then Barry leaned over and took the violin from Bob, felt of it, laid it under his chin, tightened a string, drew the bow across it, tightened another string,

FATHOMS DEEP

and to our amazement swung into a lively bit of jazz, fox-trotting down the deck and back again as he played. He ended with a caper and a snap of the strings and bowed from the hips in absurd imitation of a self-satisfied professional. "At your service," he assured Chet.

"By gollies you can *play!*" exploded the delighted Mr. Hamlin.

"Sure." Barry was casual. "Somebody in the family had to be second violin for Trix. You see I kept on after the lace-collar age. And you bet I had to work to keep up with Trix's stride." He turned to his sister. "Now, Trix, you sing to 'em."

"I'll be glad to," assented Trix quickly, as though eager to make up for ungraciousness about the violin.

I heard Trix Langdon sing many times after that, but I shall never forget the spell her voice cast upon me, and upon all of us, that night on the *Arcady*.

She sang that most touching of love songs, Laurence Hope's "Till I Wake," a song that begins so simply but whose climax demands an artistic skill that only perfect technique could afford. The girl sat quietly on the bench under the rail, hands clasped in her lap as she sang, and Barry's

CIRCE SINGING

violin followed in haunting minor accompaniment that wonderful mezzo voice, breathing the first soft words:

“When I am dying, lean over me,
Tenderly, softly”

and swelling to rich fullness at the crescendo:

“ . . . if there be an awakening,
Keep, what lulled me to sleep,
The touch of your lips on my mouth.”

At the first exquisite notes I saw Chet sit back with that relaxed content of the musician who knows he is going to be completely satisfied. He never moved until the song was over, nor did he applaud as the rest of us did when she had finished. But something passed between them. She turned her head toward him and under cover of the applause he said a single word to her—I know not what.

After that Chet sang—an old favorite I asked for. He was singing for that girl though, not for me.

“ . . . and all my soul shall strive to wake
Sweet wonder in thine eyes.”

Straight into her eyes he was looking as she sat, turned toward him on the low bench under the rail.

FATHOMS DEEP

I saw their profiles silhouetted against the lighted windows of the clubhouse.

For the encore which was insisted upon Chet gave them that lovely "Little Gypsy Sweetheart" from the Fortune Teller, than which nothing in musical numbers is better calculated to bring out tenderness in the masculine singing voice. No one, hearing Chet's baritone linger on the lovely notes, could doubt the capacity for tenderness within him; and the violin's dreamy accompaniment intensified the tender quality of the little song.

"Now, Bob, *you* sing something," spoke up Mrs. Sue briskly in the tone of a lady who does not intend to have her own family outdone. "That thing you gave at the Near-East Relief affair last winter."

"You sing too?" Chet turned to Mr. Hamlin. "And concert work!"

"*Once.*" Bob uttered the word with cryptic significance. "Just once! Mean of you to remind me of it, Sue. I gave 'em 'Ole Virginny,' Havens, for an encore (yep—had an encore) and a fellow in the front row sat wiping his eyes. Sue, here, was all cut up by his emotion, but sort o' proud too, you understand. She leaned across and whispered, soft pedal and sympathetic:

CIRCE SINGING

“ ‘ You are a Virginian? ’

“ ‘ No, ma’am,’ he says, blowing his nose, ‘ I’m a musician.’ ”

“ That was almost as funny,” I observed when the laughter had subsided, “ as the music committee of a country church where Chet sang one Sunday telling him after the service that ‘ if they had ‘a’ known he was goin’ to sing Leyramo they would ‘a’ told him opery tunes was barred.’ ”

But Bob sang for us presently and young Tracy proved equal to the lilting accompaniment of Mavis. Bob’s mellow young voice was delightful in that joyfully possessive pæan of the wedding morning. It made even an old maid thrill, that

Glad is the heart of your lover,
Who waits for your coming to-day.

“ I adore it,” confessed Mrs. Sue. “ It’s so *happy*. I always hum it while I’m doing my dusting.”

“ But is it so happy? ” Trix surprised us by asking. “ To me there is a plaintiveness about that ‘ Oh, Mavis, Mavis, Mavis!’ . . . a sort of wistfulness; as though the lover with all his happiness were fearful—not sure of the enduringness of it.”

Sue, who was lighting a cigarette, held her match

FATHOMS DEEP

in air and stared at Trix. "That's a funny thing for a jolly little flapper like you to say."

"Would *you* feel like that—on your wedding morning?" Chet was regarding Trix rather curiously too.

She turned toward him. "Yes, I should. I should know it was not the birds, or the May flowers, or the ring on my finger that would bring happiness; but something within me—within him. And I'd wonder if both of us were going to keep that something, through everything, for each other. That's the sadness under the gaiety at every wedding, isn't it? The thing that makes all the married women cry at weddings?"

"I wouldn't have believed that girl had it in her to say such a thing," Sue Hamlin whispered to me. The circle was breaking up and young Tracy was slipping the leather jacket over his guitar. "That is, I wouldn't have believed it," Mrs. Sue amended, "if I hadn't heard her sing to-night. Now can you imagine depth like that, a quality of pathos like that in a voice belonging to a little frivolous chit like Trix Langdon? Hearing her sing, you would say she was ten years older than she is—or else that her heart was breaking about something. She's a remarkable child, Miss Havens."

CIRCE SINGING

"She has had a pretty deep sorrow," I mentioned as we prepared to go down the ladder to the stern deck.

"Oh—I'm sorry." Little Mrs. Sue was contrite. "I guess she has more character than I've given her credit for." She climbed into the tender her husband was holding at the step and they rowed away through the dark.

Nevertheless, I said to myself, snuggling in my blanket and listening to the slap of water under the *Arcady's* stern, nevertheless, giving Miss Trix Langdon credit for every ounce of character she possessed—and for lovely voice, considerate little ways, and violet eyes full of appealing pathos, I didn't trust her a whole lot.

What was this secret business in Newark that she had to lie about?

Why was she meeting in town a man friend she did not invite out to Port Madison?

What "good cause" was being furthered by her encouragement of young Tracy, and why was he a "valuable asset"?

And aside from all that, she was deliberately posing for Chet's benefit—that was enough for any guardian sister.

One thing I made up my mind to, turning rest-

FATHOMS DEEP.

lessly on my pillow: this girl who discussed philosophy and the theory of education with Chet, who could make herself a congenial companion for me—creeping into my affection against the determination of my prejudice, and who could also attend the yacht club dance in a frock I would not permit Penelope Havens to be seen outside her bedroom in . . . this girl was deep,—fathoms deep.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER TRY THE TEMPER OF A WELL-MEANING FELLOW

OUR mascot played with an apple core as humans do with a temptation—a thing too fearful to tamper with, yet too alluring to resist. He ran around it, yelped at it, sprang toward it and away. Touched it gingerly. Tossed it tentatively. In horror retreated again. And finally ate it up slowly and with relish.

I watched him while I sat hemming dish-towels and reflecting upon many things. Since Chet Havens and Trix Langdon had discovered each other's music, both of them seemed to have forgotten the danger of sea damp to vocal chords. There were gay snatches of song, caught up by one from the other, amusing dialogues in recitative and long verbal discussions as to the relative merits of Massenet, Puccini and Verdi as operatic composers. It was astonishing how much that feather-headed girl had absorbed of subjects that really interested her.

I could see of course that Chet was fascinated

FATHOMS DEEP

by the little thing, and intrigued by her mysterious contradictions; but once back at the head of his school, conferring with his teachers and occupied with disciplinary problems, he would recall with tolerant amusement his summer dalliance with flapper femininity.

As to the girl, she might be amusing herself by enthralling Doctor Chetworth Havens—a decided achievement for a chit of her age—the while she pursued a clandestine affair with the Rossiter lover. Or she might really have serious designs on my brother. It was impossible to tell. That she was thoroughly enjoying herself was evident. She was busy every minute, playing tennis or bridge at the club, dancing and sailing with the young folks of the colony. And she mailed out endless post-cards scrawled over with enthusiastic reports of the good time she was having.

Chet had been doing some real work on his book, writing on the *Dixie* while Barry tinkered indefatigably at the engine of the *White Elephant* (as we had renamed Byrd Jessup's promising *Hustler*). Each morn the *White Elephant* had to be pumped out lest accumulated leakage send her to the bottom and drag the *Arcady* along with her. Bob Hamlin having heard of a really seaworthy motor-boat at

WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER

a bargain price over in Oyster Bay, had taken Sue and Barry to-day to look at the craft.

It had been close and hot for a week with flags drooping forlornly and the *Arcady* floating almost motionless on a glassy sea, her blunt nose pointing into the south. The deck awning scarcely fluttered and no refreshing breeze swept through the dog-trot. Trix, Pen and I were sitting on the upper deck, the girls making new drop-stitch sweaters they were racing each other to complete.

Suddenly, wondering at a curious change in the light, we saw the squall coming—a great black sinister cloud piling up with incredible rapidity in the west.

“Go down and close the windows, Pen,” I directed, hastily rolling up my dish-towels. “I’m going to megaphone your father. I don’t like the look of that cloud and I’d rather have him aboard the *Arcady* ——”

“He is ashore, Miss Hetty.” Trix was hurrying to finish a row of her knitting before putting aside her work. “I saw him go off in the *Dixie’s* tender with some letters to mail. The *Dixie’s* windows ought to be closed too. I’ll go over and do it.”

“But you won’t have time.”

Trix glanced at the oncoming cloud. “I can get

FATHOMS DEEP

there anyway. If the squall breaks I'll stay on the *Dixie* till it's over." She ran toward the deck ladder.

"Well, hurry then," I called. The water was still glassy but a pall of blackness was descending over the harbor; against it the yachts gleamed chalk-white. The sea was changing from steely gray to inky green and far out toward the Sound were streaks of whitecaps. Two or three little motor-boats came scurrying in toward safe harbor, and all about us people on yachts and houseboats were gathering up cushions and magazines, and carrying chairs inside.

"Hadn't we better get our deck awning rolled up, Auntie?" Pen was glowing with excitement as she scrambled up the forward ladder. Whiffs of the oncoming wind, ruffling the water in patches, blew tendrils of hair about her face. Trix, thank goodness, had reached the *Dixie* and we could see her slamming doors and windows. I watched anxiously as she came out on the stern deck and climbed into the tender again. I thought she had time to return safely, and Pen and I set to work at the ropes of the deck awning which was beginning to quiver and bulge in an ominous manner.

The huge awning which was spread across a

WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER

framework running the length of the deck, was weighted at the sides by heavy wooden poles. By hauling at the ropes one rolled awning and pole over and over until the long double rolls were parallel with the ridge-pole of the framework. It was no task for women, particularly in a gale of wind, but Pen and I worked valiantly and I knew Trix would be with us in a moment to help. The mascot was adding to the excitement with frantic yelps, dashing up and down the ladder to bark madly at Pen and me as we struggled with the awning ropes and then, from the lower deck, at Trix who was coming as fast as she could across the water.

I hoped fervently that Bob Hamlin and Barry had not started home from Oyster Bay, but before an oncoming squall you haven't much time to think of anything but your own pressing concerns. And there is something wildly stimulating about it: the darkness, the streaked green water, the spectral stillness that in a few seconds you know will change to mad turmoil of sound and motion, yourself an atom in the universe, huddling in a rocking and twisting boat.

And suddenly came the wind, sweeping with a roar across the harbor. It flung one of the awning

FATHOMS DEEP

poles high in air, tearing the ropes out of Pen's hands. As the pole banged down again Pen and I jumped for it and there we hung, our combined weight holding it while the *Arcady* and all the other anchored boats swung round and faced into the terrifying blackness of the west.

"What'll we do, Auntie?" Pen screamed. Another upward dash of the pole had lifted her off her feet. "If the wind gets under this awning won't it turn us over?"

I didn't know. I hung on grimly and screamed to Trix to hurry. With two of us hanging on the pole, a third might recapture the flying rope; but if Pen or I abandoned the pole it seemed possible that the whole awning would go—and capsize the houseboat in its tearing plunge to leeward.

And there was Trix Langdon, white water lashing all about her, rowing for dear life back to the *Dixie*!

She had remembered, she told us afterward, that Chet had been writing out on the stern deck and if any of his notes or pages of manuscript had been left out there—papers she knew were of inestimable value to the author—they would certainly be blown away and lost in the storm. "I had to go back. I couldn't think of anything else," Trix explained.

WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER

But at that horrific moment I thought the child had lost her head from terror. She was struggling to pull the flat-bottomed boat against wind and sea, her little figure in its linen middy a speck of white against the fearful green of the advancing tempest.

And there were Pen and I, lifted again and again off our feet by the billowing awning to which we clung because we dared not let go.

And there, with oars flying like windmills, was Chetworth Curtis Havens frantically rowing out from shore. He was glaring in turn at Trix in her tossing dinghy and at Pen and me, swinging on the awning pole.

I heard Trix's clear, carrying voice down the wind.

"To the *Arcady*. I'm all right. Go to the *Arcady*."

"Daddy. Daddee-ee!" shrieked Pen as a long roll of the *Arcady* swung her, suspended on straining arms, clear across the rail and over the sea.

And what did Chet Havens do?

He deliberately turned his boat and went after Trix Langdon.

Afterward he told us he knew Trix was the one

FATHOMS DEEP

in gravest peril. That if Pen and I had had two grains of sense we would have let go of the blamed awning and dropped to the deck.

I suppose we should have, but in moments like that you don't use your wits; you just hang on. Pen and I, swinging on that pole, had some idea, I suppose, that we were saving the *Arcady* from doom when as a matter of fact the awning, relieved of our weight, might merely have ripped itself free and blown away. I learned later that more than one houseboat awning, unsubstantially anchored during a squall, has been found next day astride somebody's garage.

Anyhow the terror was over in three minutes. Chet got Trix into his boat and then they were aboard the *Arcady*, his efficient hands lashing the awning fast. Pen and I collapsed on the deck and the rain beat down on us.

"But he saved Trix *first*; she was the more important. Pen and I could have swung out and dropped into the sea," I was thinking bitterly as with chattering teeth I got out of my wet clothes and rubbed my numb arms. When Pen came out of her cabin she looked a bit sulky too. I knew she had the same thought I had. That if our arms hadn't held out we might both have been at this

WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER

moment beneath the waves, while Chet Havens and that girl were drinking tea together.

For Trix had made hot tea for us and had it all ready in the cabin. Her own wet garments were sloshing about her. Chet scolded her roundly. "You might have known I would never go ashore and leave papers lying on the deck of a boat. The whole thing was a silly stunt anyhow." And swinging round on the rest of us, "Just like a pack of women. Lose their heads completely in an emergency." (Of course I knew quiet and self-contained Chet must be dreadfully upset to lose his temper like that.) "Naturally I kept my wits and went to the one who was in most danger—and that was Trix. She could not hold the dinghy up to the wind and she was drifting on the sea-wall ——"

"And Auntie and I were hanging over the waves with nothing but our biceps between us and a watery grave," observed Pen, stirring her tea and trying to speak airily.

"Nonsense. You were six inches above a perfectly safe deck and too muddled to step on it." Chet glared at her—and then he glanced sheepishly at me. I verily believe, up to then, he had actually been imagining that astute masculine reasoning in an emergency had sent him to Trix and not to his

FATHOMS DEEP

terrified relatives, and Pen's satirical tone gave him the first inkling of our opinion.

Trix jumped up and threw open the door to the stern deck.

"See—the storm's over. The water is all quieting down and do look, Miss Hetty, at that gold light under the cloud in the west ——"

"*Arcady*. Ahoy!" came a hail off to starboard.

And there were Barry and Bob Hamlin, wet to the skin but beaming of countenance, standing up in old Alf's motor-boat and calling our attention with prideful gestures to the prize they had in tow. The object that ploughed along after them was a mammoth launch whose dirty gray sides reared six feet above the water line. A plank roof supported by iron posts ran her entire length and beneath this shelter Sue, in solitary grandeur, looked too austere to throw us a smile as they swept by. Across the stern of the monster was inscribed:

Lulu T. Holmes, New York.

Barry tumbled aboard twenty minutes later. "Did you see her? Some boat. Forty-two feet long if you'll believe me, and a peach of an engine. Bob and I bought her between us for fifty each ——"

WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER

“Oh, Barry,” protested Trix faintly, “you didn’t use any of that hundred for your fall college outfit? Because if you did ——”

Barry hastened to reassure her. “Bob put up seventy-five and I threw in the twenty-five Uncle Stan gave me. I’m to make up my share working on her while Bob is away at business ——”

“How, working on her?”

“We are going to turn her into a dandy yacht. Wait till you see. When we found that peachy motor-boat positively given away at a hundred dollars it was my idea to turn her into a cruiser. We’ll do it together and I’m to be part owner. It’ll take us all summer to put her in commission maybe but you wait ——”

“Who’s going to show you how?”

“Nobody. Any intelligent chap can rebuild a boat if he puts his mind on it. And there are books of instruction ——” Barry waved a vague hand that indicated libraries of information all as simple as a b c.

“We’ll rip off the roof—she has been an excursion boat, you know, rented out by the day to parties. The man died and his widow wants the ready cash. The engine’s in perfect order—we’ll move it further aft and put a flush deck over it.

FATHOMS DEEP

And build a cabin forward of the wheel. Forty-two foot length, mind you; that'll give us an eight-foot cockpit, nine-foot engine room, two sleeping cabins and room in the bow for lav and galley,—old Alf says he can get the plumbing fixtures second-hand. We're going to name her the *Lorelei* ——”

“And what does Sue say?” I recalled the forbidding countenance of Mrs. Hamlin as she had swept by, huddled in her coat.

Barry's face clouded a little. “Oh, she isn't very enthusiastic yet. But she will be. Bob is,—and she ought to be glad he's got the yachting bug at last. She's been trying hard enough to make him like boats. Bob's going to write to-night for catalogues of marine supplies ——”

“Which reminds me”—Chet felt in his coat pocket—“I had a letter for you, Trix. What the dickens did I do with it?”

“You gave a lot of letters to me,” I remembered. I went into Pen's room and shuffled over the mail I had tossed on the bunk before changing to dry clothes. The letter for Trix was addressed in a masculine hand and over the name of a business firm in one corner were inked the initials, S. L. R.

Trix slipped the letter into her sweater pocket. I saw Barry raise his eyebrows and saw her mouth

WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER

form the word "Rossiter." Chet hadn't noticed this byplay. He was pulling the tender round to go over and change his wet clothes before supper. Trix had prevailed upon him to join the party for the yacht club dance and when he came aboard again he was spick-span in white flannels and blue serge. The harbor was ruffled by crisp little waves after the storm but the sun was setting in a blaze of copper and gold and it promised to be a fine evening.

Barry spent an hour pumping out the *Arcady* and the *White Elephant*, which latter had all but foundered in the squall. To-morrow, he decided, the darn tub was going to be beached—before he got to work in earnest on the yacht-to-be, now wallowing and bouncing heavily alongside old Alf's dock.

"And now, I suppose," Chet complained to me, "that carburetor and magneto and all the stuff I ordered for the *Hustler* can't come out of Byrd Jessup's August payment. I shall have to foot the bill myself."

"Well," I sniffed—for I was sure I had a bad cold and nervous indigestion coming on from the wetting and fright in the squall—"you were the one, weren't you, who thought it would be so pleas-

FATHOMS DEEP

ant to have young people aboard to brighten things up for Pen? ”

Chet went off with the said young people, blithe as a boy himself; and I sat all evening in the cabin, taking aspirin and trying to read a book I had picked up at the library because of its beautiful title: “The White Hope.” Of course I expected it to be one of those uplift stories, or something full of delicate sentiment like Florence Barclay’s novels, but it turned out to be a horrid thing about prize-fighting. I had thrown it down in disgust when I heard a tender bump against the step. Chet came into the cabin looking disgusted too.

That girl, it seemed, had evaded a dance with him and, searching about for her, he had seen her stepping into a car back of the club with some boy. Chet pretended amusement but he was furiously angry. Twosing stuff. Those abominable parked cars. Little devil was sneaking off for a petting party, he supposed—after begging him to go to the dance. Just let him catch Pen in a parked car. Where was his tobacco pouch? He was through. They didn’t drag him to any of those fool dances again.

I never said a word though I should have en-

WILD WOMEN AND WILD WEATHER

joyed expressing my opinion about one of Chet's age and scholastic position fox-trotting round with bobbed flappers. Chet had come home to me, sore in pride if not in heart, and had in a way—by adopting the middle-aged whimsical viewpoint—arrayed himself on my side. It was not the time to be disagreeable. I found his tobacco pouch, gave him "The White Hope" which I thought he might enjoy more than I had, and packed him off to the *Dixie* for a comfortable read in slippers and bathrobe.

Barry brought the girls home about midnight and the *Arcady* was rocking placidly, all lights out save our lantern swinging high overhead, when I was rudely summoned from first sweet slumber by a smart slap in the face. I sat up, blinking, and discovered a sizable pebble on the blanket.

And at that same instant, the stilly night was rent by ear-splitting sound just without my case-ment. A would-be tenor and a near-tenor and two violent bassos, all in a close—far too close—harmony, seemed to make up the quartette.

Oh, lovely Trix,
Oh, lovely Trix,
Oh, lovely Trix,
Sle-e-e-ep well!

FATHOMS DEEP

A serenade! Was that girl going to give me no peace night or day?

The quartette, after this concerted offensive, seemed to get together satisfactorily and the close harmony finished in stunning style.

Sl-heep while the mo-hun above
Fl-huds the world with light;
Sl-heep while the dreaming stars
(Touching work by the tenors.)
Wh-hisper a good-night.
Swe-heet Trix, sleep on
Until the dawn. . . .
(With tremendous downward swoop of the bassos.)

Pen's casement creaked.

"Sst, boys! You're under Auntie's window. Go round on the starboard side."

Across the water drifted a weird catcall. I don't know to this day whether it issued from the throat of Barry, or Bob Hamlin, or Doctor Chetworth Curtis Havens. But the quartette rowed away and blessed silence held the harbor and the night.

CHAPTER XIV

CIRCE SINGS AGAIN IN THE MOONLIGHT AND AN HONEST MARINER IS IMPERILED

"SCHOPENHAUER," mumbled Mr. Hamlin through a mouthful of nails, "asserts that the stoutest arm is unable to give impetus to a feather."

"Meaning my inability to be convinced by twenty-four hours of argument." His wife, hands in sweater pockets and with a countenance expressing extreme disapproval, watched him drive a nail. "Wait till Steve Burroughs casts his eye on That Thing." She flicked a glance of withering contempt over the elephantine proportions of the *Lulu T. Holmes*.

We had gathered on the beach to inspect the beginning of work on the weird craft that Bob and Barry were going to change into a smart and yachtish power-cruiser. The monster had been hauled up on the sand where her free-board towered imposingly over our heads. Her engine lolled in the grass near by, and hidden in her depths Barry could be heard sawing planks.

FATHOMS DEEP

"Steve," maintained Bob Hamlin, placing another nail, "will appreciate the endeavor I am making toward seamanship ——"

"Oh, will he?" jeered Sue. "Honestly, I don't know whether to laugh or to weep over that tub ——"

"Yacht," corrected Mr. Hamlin.

"And I don't see why you want to change its name either," Mrs. Sue declared with dangerous sweetness. "I think *The Lulu* is a perfect name for it."

"Wait till you folks see her in the water," Barry popped up, sucking a finger that had annexed a sliver, "with a snow-white cabin and wicker deck chairs and a club pennant flying ——"

"What club, pray tell?" Mrs. Hamlin's voice suggested deeps of irony. She asked Chet for a match and winked at him over it as he held it for her cigarette.

Chet was a lot more cheerful this morning. At breakfast Pen had rallied Trix about girls who sat out in parked cars with their own brothers. "Is that the best you could do?" asked Pen.

Chet had looked up quickly. "So it was Barry you gave my fox-trot to, Miss!"

"We had something to talk over," Trix buttered

IN THE MOONLIGHT

her muffin serenely, "and that seemed the quietest place."

"Well, you had plenty of company," asserted Pen. "There was hardly a couple on the floor. Even I was invited to sit out in a parked car."

"Pen, you didn't?" I looked with alarm at my fledgling. "I hope *you* have enough sense of propriety, Pen Havens, not to do that sort of thing."

"The more taste, the less speed, Penny dear," remarked Trix flippantly as she reached for a second muffin.

"Catch Pen in a parked car—she's too prim." Barry grinned at my niece whose decent New England training I was glad I could depend upon.

But Pen flushed and grinned back at that boy. "Try me," I heard her whisper to the young scamp. Instead of our Pen influencing Trix Langdon for good things seemed to be working round the other way. Hereafter I would accompany those girls to the club.

Pen rowed me over to the beach and we found Chet there, on his way back from the post-office. As we listened, with reservations of personal opinion, to Mr. Hamlin's eloquent dissertation on boat-reconstruction I saw Chet frown, his glance focussed on something behind me. Following his

FATHOMS DEEP

gaze I perceived Miss Langdon alighting from the tender which her brother had drawn up on the beach. She was wearing her town clothes and carried her beaded hand-bag.

Of course—that Rossiter letter yesterday!

The twins did not join us immediately but stood conferring together on the sand. I was standing by myself, a few moments later, gazing off at the harbor, always so attractive to me in its busy morning aspect with women on marketing bent descending into tenders from the yachts and houseboats; and the others were up at the bow end of the *Lulu T. Holmes* engaged in heated argument about the relative advantages of flush decks and trunk cabins, when I heard Barry's voice on the opposite side of the boat. The twins, coming up from the beach, had paused for a last word together.

“I don't see why you have to go so often, anyway. Leila ——”

“Please leave Leila out of it. If Trix can have any little diversion to help her through this abominable summer you are the last one who ought to object ——”

“I'm just as sorry as you are about it, but I think you take a chance, going so often. You've met a lot of people here at the Port; some of 'em

IN THE MOONLIGHT

might be going to Newark on business. And they'd wonder ——"

"What if they do? Anybody can go to Newark, I guess." I heard her voice sharpen. "Barry, you leave things to me. I'm old enough to use my own judgment. . . . Oh, there's the trolley! Run and hold it for me."

I saw them dash up the path together, Trix waving her hand-bag and Barry shouting to the motor-man.

Mehitable Havens got into one of the tenders, rowed herself out to the *Arcady* and sat down to write a letter to Leila Langdon in Maine.

Things looked pretty serious, I thought. Chet's policy of minding our own business was all very well, but in a way Leila had entrusted her young sister to me, and since I seemed not to have a particle of control over the twins I intended to put some of the responsibility on the shoulders of one who had. I suppose at the back of my head was my sense of sisterly responsibility about Chet. Anyway I kept the letter overnight to make sure I was not sending it in any impulse of irritation, and next morning gave it to Pen to mail.

Trix was back by supper time. She had bought herself a new frock, a little straight slip of eye-

FATHOMS DEEP

letted linen with that slim, petticoatless effect and a narrow string of patent leather at the hips. A pair of outrageous jet earrings, suitable for a widow of fifty, dangled under her bobbed fair hair.

But she was not in a bright humor as she had been after her last trip to town. Something must have gone wrong. All through supper she was quiet and abstracted, and she had that older, serious aspect I had noticed once before—the look of a bearer of responsibilities.

The sunset gun had boomed across the harbor and I was up on deck taking down the *Arcady's* colors. Pen was finishing the supper dishes in the galley and Chet had gone over to put up the *Dixie's* lantern. As I caught the descending flag in my arms I heard Bob Hamlin's voice below me. His rowboat was drawn up at the step and he was chatting with Trix. The awning above the stern veranda hid them from me but I supposed, discovering Trix leaning over the rail, Bob had stopped to visit a moment.

“Where's Barry?”

“Over on the beach. Bidding good-night to the lovely *Lulu T. Holmes*.” Trix giggled.

“The lovely *Lorelei* that is to be,” corrected Mr. Hamlin with dignity. “I'm hanged if I can see

IN THE MOONLIGHT

why none of you give us credit for a little constructive ability ——”

“Creative ability is what you’re going to need, to turn that precious launch into a cruising yacht.”

Bob let this pass. “Here’s a package of sal soda for Barry. He can scrub out the bilge to-morrow with this stuff and lots of boiling water. You tell him, will you? And say, young lady, what’s this about your lunching in town with married men? Naughty-naughty.”

“What do you mean?”

“Oh, I saw you the other day at the McAlpin with Syd Rossiter ——”

“Do you know him?”

“Sure I know him. And I know Mrs. Syd too. And I know she’s away in the country ——”

Trix’s tone had a slight edge. “And just what business is it of yours, Mr. Bob Hamlin?”

“None at all. Only I don’t like to see nice little girls making that kind of mistake. Bad business. Oh, no, I shan’t say anything—I’m no blabber. But you cut it out, Trix; it doesn’t pay. Take it from your Uncle Dudley. You play about with young Tracy and the gang here and leave luncheons with married chaps like Syd Rossiter alone.”

When I came down the forward ladder Pen was

FATHOMS DEEP

still busy in the galley. I hoped she had not overheard that conversation at the stern. I looked sharply at her but she was humming and clattering the dishes as she put them away. I carried the flag to the cabin. Bob Hamlin had departed and Trix was leaning over the rail contemplating the harbor. I heard her sigh heavily. Chet, returning from the *Dixie*, flung himself on the seat that ran across the stern veranda and got out his pipe. It was so still you could hear crickets chirping on shore, and a young moon was soaring high. The *Arcady* seemed to swing where its silver reflection met the golden carpet that stretched from the glowing west. Across the bay a tug drawing some gravel barges sent a red lance down into the water; as she turned, out toward the Sound, her starboard light gleamed pure emerald against the dusk.

“Sing to me,” I heard Chet murmur.

The little figure leaning on the rail did not stir, but softly across the night floated the beautiful mezzo voice. It was Dudley Buck’s *Sunset* she was singing:

“Look off, dear love, across the sallow sands,
And see yon meeting of the sun and sea;
How long they kiss, in sight of all the lands—
Oh, longer, longer, longer, we!”

IN THE MOONLIGHT

"Go on," prompted Chet when she stopped after the fourth line.

How dared she sing that thing to my Chet? But perhaps, as she sang, her thought had been about that lad who had died, and she cherished no intent to stir my brother. "I don't believe I feel like singing to-night," she told him.

I had not lighted the lamp in the cabin but had lingered in the darkness, held by the spell of those most lovely notes floating across the summer night. The tinkle of Pen's silverware came faintly from the galley.

"How can you sing like that, you little, little thing?" Chet's voice was deep and caressing from the shadowy corner where he sat. "How can you, at your age, have known the loneliness—the denied longing—that could make you sing like that?"

He stopped short, remembering probably about the sorrow the girl had so recently experienced, and of which I had told him.

"I know *you* understand what those things are—loneliness and denied longing." She turned her head toward the dark corner where Chet sat; the moonlight was on her hair and on the white frock she wore. "I'm so sorry, Doctor Havens."

"You have heard about my marriage, Trix?"

FATHOMS DEEP

Of course I had no business to be there in the dark, listening. But where was I to go? I couldn't very well sit on the bunk in Pen's cubby-hole, or pace up and down the dogtrot. Those two must know I was aboard the *Arcady* and within hearing, even if they thought I was up on deck.

"Yes—I heard about it, Doctor Havens. She was awfully young, to go like that. You must have missed her cruelly all these years. And little Pen, too ——"

"Eighteen years it has been, almost—but good old Het has been a sort of big sister and mother to me ——"

"And guardian," Miss Trix Langdon added ever so softly.

"Not that I needed a guardian," laughed Chet with masculine inability to perceive feminine cat-scratches. "Dull, uninteresting sort of chap I've been, I guess, since my brief and early salad larkiness. But Het's been a tower of strength to lean on." There was a moment's silence. Then:

"Of course I've been lonely," admitted Chet. "Ghastly lonely."

She looked out across the moonlit harbor. "I think they come back, don't you?"

Now Chet, I am sure, in recent busy years has

IN THE MOONLIGHT

not given much suffering thought to the far-distant, short-lived romance of his impetuous boyhood. I saw the match with which he was lighting his pipe suspended in air. "Come back?" he echoed vaguely.

"I always think of it, nights when it is so still—out here on the water, you know."

"Why on the water especially?"

"That thing from the Nautilus. . . . Don't you know it?"

She was leaning her elbows on the rail, fingers locked under her chin, and she recited the words as exquisitely as she would have sung them, had they been set to music.

"Sometimes the dead seem very near, at sea.
The coarse vibrations of the earth debar
Our loved souls coming where we are:
But through God's ether, unimpeded, free,
They wing their way, the ocean depths above,
And find the hearts they love."

Chet did not speak, back in the shadows.

"Doctor Havens, have you ever read Myers on 'Human Personality and Its Persistence After Bodily Death'?"

"Good heavens—have you?" I heard Chet's pipe crash on the deck; it must have fallen out of

FATHOMS DEEP

his mouth. He retrieved the pipe and slid along the bench, staring at her.

"You amazing child—you unreadable little enigma. When, in the name of all that's preposterous, have *you* had time to read Myers and his ilk? I wish I understood you. . . ."

(I wished I did, too. This was the girl, mind you, who an hour ago had been pert to kindly Bob Hamlin about her meetings with a married man in town.)

She said a strange thing then. "You will never understand me better than you do now, Doctor Havens. You've got to take Trix as you find her. And then—and then just say good-bye to her."

"Why?" demanded my brother.

She made no answer.

"Why, Trix?"

Still silence.

"Suppose I refuse to say—just good-bye? Suppose this Trix has—has interested me so much I have simply got to understand her—the whole way?" In the moonlight I saw Chet's hand slip along the rail and cover hers. Well, I couldn't stand any more of that. Sharply I struck a match and flooded the cabin with lamplight.

"Fine evening, isn't it?" I tossed casually in

IN THE MOONLIGHT

the direction of the stern veranda, and picking up my needlework sat down under the lamp.

They came inside, Chet blinking at the light and with a self-conscious expression on his face.

“Hello, Het. Where’ve *you* been?”

“Oh, pottering round,” his sister mentioned. If people were going to make love on the *Arcady* they might as well realize they were likely to be overheard.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH WE ENCOUNTER SQUALLS

THE *Arcady* had a log. Any member of the fleet was privileged to add to it, but its keeping fell chiefly to the skipper—like most other jobs on board. When we had to pump out; what had to be repaired (too late now, alas, for listing in the August payment); and the various doings of our gallant commodore, our hard-driven skipper, our handy mate, our cheerful crew, our incalculable deck-steward and our spoilt and cherished mascot, were faithfully recorded before the skipper sought her nightly repose.

On a certain day in August the evening report was epitomized in one terse and trenchant syllable:

Squalls.

Scarcely a member of our company, that fatal day, who did not have a heated encounter with some other member. Even the mascot got into a fight with a harmless fox-terrier on shore. There had been a spell of trying weather, with fog hang-

SQUALLS

ing thick over the harbor and blotting out the shore line, and at ten-minute intervals for two days the fog-horn out on the Point bellowing mournfully—a sound distressingly suggestive of a bovine parent deprived of her calf. The *Arcady's* decks were moist and slippery. Wet shoes stood under every bunk and the cabin rugs were soggy with salt water tracked in from the rowboats. Pins and needles left uncovered, turned rusty overnight.

We had all been shut up too closely together within the confined quarters where quiet or intervals of solitude were impossible—and some of us were carrying anxieties, others, exasperations. Only sunshine and busy occupation outside for everybody could have held our ship's company in perfect amity at this time and the continued dreariness of low-pressure weather had its inevitable result in edginess.

The quarreling began at breakfast when Trix teased Pen about a quaint little trick she has of measuring cream into her coffee with a teaspoon.

“Like adding vanilla to a custard,” laughed Trix. “Did you train her that way, Doctor Havens, or is she afraid more than three spoonfuls will make her fat?”

Pen's eyes snapped. She weighed a good twenty

FATHOMS DEEP

pounds more than the lissome Trix and though she was sturdy and muscular rather than plump, no one could have called her fairy-like.

"It's her admirable New England thrift," explained Chet. "Pen takes after her great-aunt Dorcas who was so saving, my dear Trix, that she always took all the left-over medicines each year so that nothing should be wasted."

"You don't want to get too precise, Penny." Trix flipped a well-buttered bit of toast at the mascot. "Penelope the Precise. Look out; that's the first symptom of old-maiditis."

Both Trix and Chet were in a larky mood that morning. Before breakfast we had been treated to a musical dialogue in improvised doggerel and ending in a really beautiful duet, baritone carrying the air and alto faultlessly following. The two had come to the table in a gale of laughter. What Pen resented (and her Aunt Mehitable likewise) was not the teasing words, but the combined derision of those two.

Chet observed his daughter's sulky expression.

"Come, come, youngster, you don't mind a little kidding, do you? Stop pouting, Pen; I don't like you with your mouth that way."

Pen had set her lips to keep them from trembling.

SQUALLS

She flared out: "Probably you prefer mouths daubed with lipstick at breakfast."

"Pen!" thundered her father.

Pen flung down her napkin and rose from her chair. "That's right. Take her part against me and l-let her l-laugh at me." She rushed from the cabin and into her own room, slamming the door behind her.

"Oh, I'm so sorry." Trix sprang up. "We had no business to tease her. The poor child is disappointed about the sailing picnic to-day. Penny, Penny, let me in ——" she ran to the closed door and knocked on it. "Let Trix in, honey. She was a pig to tease you." The door opened grudgingly. Trix vanished inside and presently we heard the girls laughing together.

Chet made it up too, by inviting Pen to go ashore with him for the mail and Trix corralled her brother for some work with the paint-brush. "It's too wet to do anything on your old *Lulu*, Barry, and this is a grand day to paint the upper deck. Nobody wants to sit up there in this fog."

I heard the slip-slap of their brushes over my head while I washed up in the galley. Since the inside of the houseboat was so still the young voices overhead were clearly audible through the

FATHOMS DEEP

mist-drenched air. It seemed to be Barry and Trix who were squabbling now. Barry's voice at any rate was belligerent.

"If it's a question of money, I'll stake you out of my allowance. I can't see why you are so peeved about losing a nickel or two ——"

"You know it isn't a question of money, Barry Langdon."

"Well, I'm plumb ashamed to have you such a short sport as you were at the club last night. A little game for tenth-of-a-cent a point and you try to squirm out of it! Trix Langdon's reputation ——"

"Yes—and Leila Langdon's principles. You know very well what they are about playing auction for money ——"

"Oh, dash Leila's principles." I could hear Barry's paint-brush sloshing about furiously. "There's something bigger involved, isn't there, than Leila's famous principles? Next time you are asked to play at the club don't be so squeamish about it—get me?"

It did seem that boy was determined to encourage his sister to be her worst self; that he was proud of her reputation for fastness. Yet a little later I heard him remonstrating with Pen about

SQUALLS

putting powder on her nose. "What in time do you want to use that stuff for, Penny? You don't need it with that skin of yours. I hate to see you do such things."

"But Trix does."

"Oh, Trix! If Trix ever went out without her powder she'd get facial neuralgia. But you and Trix are two different people—*comprennez?*"

"You two wait a minute." Trix spoke from her window. "I want you to take me across to the trolley."

I had expected that. There had been two letters for her in the pile of mail Chet had handed me; one letter had S. L. R. penned above the business address. The other letter, bearing a Maine postmark, I had thought at first was for me. I had been looking for some reply to my distracted epistle to Leila Langdon. But this morning's letter from Maine had been for Trix.

"Off to town again?" I asked, as she came out of her room in a smart blue serge frock plus the usual earrings and with face compellingly made up in the current mode. She didn't look, I thought grimly, like a young person who would balk at tenth-of-a-cent auction for the sake of anybody's principles.

FATHOMS DEEP

"You will have to hurry, Trix," Pen shouted from the tender. "We are picking up Dad from the *Dixie*. He's going to town this morning too."

I saw Trix start. Chet had decided on the trip very suddenly after reading one of his letters which concerned a threatened delay about delivery of some rugs he had ordered for the school dormitories. She stood for a moment frowning uncertainly, as though she were considering an abrupt alteration in her plans. Then I noticed the open letter she was holding, and my heart gave a queer sickly flop.

It was my letter to Leila Langdon.

"Go get Doctor Havens and come back for me," Trix called to the two in the tender. "I want to speak to Miss Havens a minute."

Between thumb and finger she held the letter toward me. And she looked at me with something in her violet eyes that I had never seen before. It made me squirm a little.

"You meant this kindly, I know, Miss Havens. But really it wasn't necessary."

I felt myself flush. "Leila sent that to you?"

"It came in the mail this morning. Please do understand, dear Miss Hetty, that my sister and I have no secrets from each other. Whatever I do she

SQUALLS

is informed about and there is no occasion for you to inter—to feel you must report to her. Barry and I are not here in your charge, if I may remind you of that, and I hope you will not distress yourself with any feeling of responsibility about us.”

She laid the letter on the cabin table between us.

“I am sorry,” she added. And went out to the waiting tender.

As for me, I was so upset I didn’t do a stroke of work all morning. The minx. “Sorry!” There had been a gleam in her eye which said to me plainly: “You mind your business and I’ll mind mine.”

I was tearing the unfortunate letter into shreds and casting the shreds overboard when Pen burst in on me.

“Aunt Hetty, I think it’s a mean trick—Dad and Trix sneaking off to town together without me. They are going to have lunch at Delmonico’s ——”

“Who said so?”

“I heard Dad tell her so.”

Here was a new idea. Trix had seemed provoked at the news of Chet’s contemplated trip but perhaps that had all been a pose for my benefit. Maybe Chet and that girl ——

I picked up my sewing and looked at Pen re-

FATHOMS DEEP

provingly. "Shame on you, Pen Havens, for showing such jealous and childish spirit. You went last time, didn't you? This trip was not planned at all. They both had letters in the morning mail and each decided quite suddenly to go in ——"

"That's what *you* believe," returned Pen cryptically.

"I don't like your manner, Pen. And you are being disrespectful to your father." After a pause, while Pen hummed in irritating fashion:

"Have you any real reason for thinking your father and Trix planned the day in town together?"

"Have you?" Pen was growing pert, it seemed, through association with the Pittsburgh pair whose tongues were so glib. Well, in a few weeks I should have Pen safely back in the decent and proper atmosphere of Braceley where youth knew its place and Chetworth Curtis Havens remembered his dignity.

"It is neither polite nor respectful, Penelope," (in my most maiden-auntish manner) "to reply to one question with another. Please get off that table—the leg is wobbly. And go change your wet shoes. There is no reason, I presume, why your father should not give Trix Langdon a little treat,

SQUALLS

or why you should be so snippish about it. Answer me; is there?"

"Now, Aunt Hetty, you don't trust Trix ——"

"Who said I didn't, Miss?"

"And you are thinking the same thing I am: that in spite of her cute little ways and our liking to have her round, she isn't—isn't just the sort of relative we would be proud of—at Braceley, I mean. Now is she, Auntie?"

I snapped the dish-towel around and started the hem at the other end. If even little Pen was finding something to worry about things were indeed getting serious. Yet one could not impart such anxieties to a child like Pen. "Don't upset yourself with nonsense of that sort, Penelope Havens. Your father would never ——"

Pen sprang off the table.

"Oh, *wouldn't* he? I suppose you've got eyes in your head, Aunt Hetty, same as I have." She vanished in her cabin. Rain was beginning to slap at the windows and the fog-horn out on the Point was wailing dismally. A nice day for a little treat in town!

Pen came back in dry slippers and sat down with her knitting on one of the transoms. In this cosy intimacy of feminine employment, she pursued:

FATHOMS DEEP

"It isn't that I don't like Trix—you can't help liking her. But I can't say I'd exactly want her for—for a stepmother. Aunt Hetty, you needn't try to pretend to me. I can see through you and I know you're worried." Pen knitted furiously, with bent head. "And I'm worried too, Aunt Hetty. Daddy's such an old precious—I'd hate to see him unhappy. And I know what Goldie Dunlop told me ——"

"You mean about the boy who was killed last Christmas when the car turned over?"

"At five A. M., yes. On the way back from—where?"

I dropped the dish-towel. "Pen Havens, what do you mean by making such a remark—a mere girl like you ——"

Pen continued to knit placidly. "Girls aren't mere any more, Aunt Hetty. We discuss everything. Do you expect us to drop our eyelashes and look absent-minded when gossip goes around—the way girls did when you were my age? But of course I can't very well talk to Daddy and I think *you* ought to. Sort of put him wise to what people out where Trix lives say about the way she used to carry on."

I was speechless. Pen's assumption of sophisti-

SQUALLS

cation and her calm proposal that I warn the innocently masculine Chet left me without words and almost without breath. I went forward and slammed the front door against the rain that was driving in before a rising east wind. Chet had taken his umbrella; probably at this moment those two were close together under it, strolling toward some restaurant. Or more likely they were cosily side by side in a taxi. I banged the galley window shut and set about preparing lunch.

Barry, coat collar turned up about his ears, came aboard a minute later with the damaged and cuffed mascot who was badly in need of sympathy and iodine for his injured ear. I heard Pen and Barry chattering together as they tended the wet and shivering little dog and tucked him up under my cherished knitted afghan.

"I bet he won't pick on any more fox-terriers. Barry—what is Trix so worried about?"

"What makes you think she is worried about anything?"

"I've got eyes, haven't I? You and Trix have something on your minds and it is worrying Trix frightfully."

"Well, it's on our minds, not yours. Take my

FATHOMS DEEP

advice and quit bothering about what doesn't concern you, that's a good kid ——"

"I'm not a kid! And I think you are a queer brother to let Trix go around with married men ——"

"Where'd you get that dope?"

"Well, I heard Mr. Hamlin scolding her for taking lunch with a married man at the McAlpin ——"

"Syd Rossiter, you mean? Why, old Syd is the husband of Leila's particular chum—he's thirty-five or forty years old."

"Favorite age of Trix's, I should say," murmured Pen.

"What's that?"

"Nothing. What does Trix go to Newark so much for, Barry?"

"Who says she goes to Newark?" There was a startled note in Barry's voice. "Who put you up to asking me that?"

"Nobody put me up to it—you are in the *worst* temper to-day. I saw the Newark ticket she dropped out of her hand-bag."

"Spied on her, did you? And that father of yours thought he would follow along when she went to town this morning, didn't he?"

"No such thing." Pen's voice was rising wrath-

SQUALLS

fully too. "Daddy was going anyway. You must have a guilty conscience, to suspect everybody so much ——"

"Well, look here, Pen Havens, the whole bunch of you want to quit speculating about Trix's and my personal affairs. We don't like it—see?" His voice came back from the stern deck whither he had flung himself. "I'll have lunch at the club. G'bye."

"Barry, wait a minute. Please let me say what I started out to ——"

The step creaked as he came down into the cabin again. "Well, shoot; what is it? But don't kid yourself you're making any hit with me, meddling ——"

"I don't want to meddle," Pen's voice was a little shaky. "I only want to say: if it's money you and Trix are worrying about, Barry—I know she has lost a lot playing auction ——"

"Oh, shucks! Twenty-five dollars or so ——"

"Well, if that's what's worrying her I have a little money of my own. It's in the bank and I could get some of it to lend to Trix ——"

"Penny, you're a good kid." Barry spoke gruffly. "That's darn decent of you, I'll say it is, and you bet I appreciate it. But it isn't the

FATHOMS DEEP

auction . . . that's a trifle." The step creaked and he spoke from the stern deck again. "Look here, Pen; not all the money in the U. S. treasury could lift the particular worry Trix Langdon is carrying just now. You can't do anything and I can't do anything—except be mighty kind to my sister. Now for Pete's sake don't tell her I said anything. So long."

One more quarrel finished up this day of squalls within the good ship *Arcady*. And it was between me and Chetworth Curtis Havens. He came aboard from the club launch about four o'clock, in a detestable temper.

Yes, he was soaked to the skin. No, he had *not* caught one of his bronchial colds—he was husky from too many cigarettes. Yes, those rugs for the school dormitories would be shipped shortly. No, he and Trix had not lunched together—it seemed she had an appointment to keep and he had left her at the Thirty-third Street entrance to the Hudson Tubes. No, he had no idea whether she was bound for Newark. Yes, she had said she would be home in time for supper.

"Did she meet that man—Rossiter? She had a letter from him this morning."

"How should I know whom she met, Hetty?"

SQUALLS

Or where she went." Chet glared at me over his cup of hot tea. He was shivering and I was sure he was in for one of his bronchitis attacks. After a moment or two, while the rain drummed on the cabin roof:

"Did you write that letter to Miss Leila Langdon in Maine?"

"I did. And it came back this morning—enclosed to Miss Trix Langdon. And I was quietly told not to interfere with what was not my business—or words to that effect."

Chet continued to sip tea and munch sandwiches. "I'm sorry you took it upon yourself to write, Hetty. After all, it isn't our business. The young lady is here in her brother's charge, not ours, and in whatever youthful way she chooses to amuse herself, no one could doubt the real fineness of that little girl. I have never known in one so young such depth of character ——"

"Hmf!" I sniffed as I took up the teapot. Chet was right about the depth—fathoms deep, she was.

"She has one of the sweetest natures I ever came in contact with." Chet was now getting into his raincoat to go over to the *Dixie*. "Your suspicious attitude toward that young girl, Hetty, is inexplicable to me—and—and deplorable. Curi-

FATHOMS DEEP

osity and suspicion on the part of an elderly unmarried woman toward one younger and more—er, toward a younger one, are always painful to witness. And such a spirit in *you*, my dear, amazes me.”

With these virtuous expressions of his opinion my brother stepped out on the stern deck. The rain beat on the awning and the tender was tossing on the gray sea that rushed away astern. It looked like a wretched night.

I could not forbear the last word. “Take two grains of quinine right away, and two more before you come over to supper. And put your sweater on under your coat. I don’t usually show such a spirit because I don’t have occasion for it. When the only brother I have gives evidence of losing his good sense because a girl young enough to be his daughter has infatuated him ——”

Chet paused with one foot on the step and the other in the dinghy. Either he was feverish already with that cold, or he was flushed with anger.

“Look here, Hetty Havens, that is quite enough. Because I take a slight interest in a very lovely and very interesting young girl who is, in a way, our guest, there is no reason why you should lose *your* good sense and dignity and attack me like a virago.

SQUALLS

Plain, petty jealousy it is, and I am ashamed of you."

The tender shot away from the step. I looked out at the storm-swept harbor through stinging tears. Chet to speak to me like that! With the *Arcady* rocking and pounding, and the fog-horn bellowing dismally over on the Point, and tears continually blinding my eyes, I prepared supper. And the meal was eaten by the four of us in strained silence.

Afterward Barry went off in the *Dixie's* tender. He said he would wait at the club for Trix. Chet and Pen played a half-hearted game of pinochle. I knew Chet would not go to bed until that girl returned. Every fifteen minutes he went out on the stern deck and peered over the black, wind-driven water. Eight bells clanged. Then one bell. Two bells. Three bells. It was past eleven when Barry rowed Trix out to the *Arcady*. She was drenched to the skin and looked completely fagged. Whatever she and Barry had talked about in the tender, she had very little to say when she came into the cabin except that she was sorry anybody had waited up, that it was certainly a nasty night, and that she had had a pleasant day in town.

Going up the dogtrot in the middle of the night

FATHOMS DEEP

for tins to put under leaky places in the cabin ceiling, I heard a sound that made me pause outside Trix's door.

She was sobbing.

My first impulse was to push open the door and ask the child if anything serious was the matter. But what was the use? It would only mean another rebuff—another snub for my pains. I thought of Barry's admonition to Pen about the Havens family minding its own business. I went on to my own cabin and crawled into my bunk.

CHAPTER XVI

TELLS HOW WE RIDE OUT A GALE AND SUFFER MUTINY ON BOARD

BARRY, on the port transom, feet higher than head and a boat-building manual propped on his chest, recited perseveringly :

“ ‘ Get three planks fastened all around beside the garboard and then step off the width according to schedule, after which, using the new gauge, put planks around below the sheer strake ——’ ”

“ Oh, for goodness sake ! ” protested Trix who was busily addressing newspaper wrappers at the cabin table. Beside her was a pile of the latest edition of the Port Madison *Chit-Chat* and each paper, conspicuously marked with red pencil, was tucked into a wrapper and added to a heap on the floor.

“ Well, it’s raining, isn’t it ? ” complained Barry. “ Can’t you let a fellow study the theoretical side of his job when he can’t work outside ? ”

“ Lucky for you your *Lulu* is getting wet,” observed Pen from the starboard transom where,

FATHOMS DEEP

with tempestuously flying needles, she was bringing the periwinkle sweater to a finish. "Sue Hamlin says the sun spread the seams so, the old tub was likely to sink when you put her in the water."

"Oh, is that so? Sue Hamlin thinks because her brother owns that *Sorceress* she is always quoting that she knows everything about yachts. But take it from me Bob and I know a thing or two ourselves. Listen to this:" Barry flipped over the pages of his manual:

"'Before launching fill all opened seams with common laundry soap. By the time it has dissolved the planking will have swollen up and the seams become tight——'"

"Well," commented I from the doorway where I was wiping beads of damp off the woodwork, "that seems a clever idea, Barry, but take a house-keeper's advice and buy that white kind of soap that floats."

A sudden lunge of the *Arcady* sent the pile of wrapped newspapers rolling across the floor. Pen shoved them back with her foot. "Mailing 'em to all your friends, aren't you?" she observed.

Trix, serenely licking stamps and affixing them, was not disturbed. "My friends will have a good

MUTINY ON BOARD

laugh. . . . Listen to this, Miss Hetty. Isn't it a scream?"

She caught up one of the papers and read aloud the paragraph enclosed in red brackets.

" 'Those of the fair sex who entered the tub race contest in Saturday's water sports had to yield place to a Pittsburgh visitor at the Port this summer—Miss Beatrice Langdon, whose charm and vivacious spirits have added much to the zest of younger set gaieties. Miss Langdon took the prize over all comers, not only in the tub race but in the thirty-yard swim and diving contests.' "

"Trix the incomparable," murmured I—and, ashamed of myself instantly, backed up the dog-trot hoping nobody had heard me.

"What's the matter with *her* this morning?" Barry flung down the boat-building manual and sat up, yawning. "Long words and short tempers these New England spinsters indulge in at times, what?"

"Sun's coming out," Trix offered as a diversion. "Now for pity's sake go drive nails, Barry Langdon, and leave us women in peace."

Sure enough a golden beam stretched across the galley floor. The long and trying storm was breaking up. Clouds were scudding away and some of

FATHOMS DEEP

the yachts were already dipping in patches of blue water. Over on the *Bigenough* Sue Hamlin was getting out her blankets to dry and Chet, rowing across from the *Dixie*, had changed to his white sweater.

Barry leaped for our dinghy, mumbling something about inspecting the seams of the *Lulu T. Holmes*, and Trix and I began to drape damp garments over the rails of the *Arcady* and to set out wet canvas footwear in rows on deck.

"Spell o' fine weather now." Old Alf, rowing by, backed water with one hand and held a finger aloft to test the wind. "Goin' to blow from the nor'west, come sundown. Ye ain't worried 'bout thet rope moorin', Miss Havens?"

Pen laughed, reaching down for the letters Chet had brought from the post-office. "You want to scare us about that rope of ours, don't you? It's held so far, hasn't it?"

"Wal," old Alf regarded Pen and the *Arcady* impassively, spat to leeward and resumed his oars, "ye been warned ef anything happens. I wouldn't want no rope holdin' me 'gainst no nor'west blow at the Port, thet's all."

Chet grinned as the old fellow pulled away with his chopping longshore stroke. "Still hankering

MUTINY ON BOARD

to sell me a fifty-dollar chain and mushroom, isn't he? Too late now; any little dicker of that kind had to be put through ere the August payment was passed to friend Jessup."

Everybody was in a good humor at luncheon. The sun seemed to have melted our general edginess. Trix and Pen held a pally conference over the relative merits of V and bateau necklines for new sweaters. I decided to make a cocoanut cake for supper and Chet, without being asked, found the screw-driver and proceeded to fix a door hinge for me—the way a man does when he thinks he can create a pleasant and forgiving atmosphere by doing something he has a vague memory of being nagged about.

Then he said he was sick of writing and challenged Trix to a set of tennis. She suggested picking up young Tracy and his sister for doubles, and off they went, the mascot in tow, Chet looking like a boy in his white flannels and hatless in the broiling sun like any youngster.

Chet Havens was having the time of his life and it seemed ungenerous to begrudge it to him. After all, Chet had never had much fun. Braceley responsibilities would soon have their clutch on him; if he wanted to play a bit why should I be so re-

FATHOMS DEEP

sentful about it? Maybe he was right and I had been showing a jealous, spinsterish spirit.

I hoped I wasn't jealous. I knew Chet couldn't be forever satisfied with just Pen and me. That is, I ought to realize it. But I simply could not see happiness, or any real companionship for a man of Chet's age and tastes with this girl who was anything but my ideal of what the mistress of Braceley House should be. A girl who painted her lips and who, for all her patter of profundities, had the reputation of being fast. And who was mixed up in some affair that made her furtive and secretive. A girl like that for my Chet!

Yet that Chet was seriously attracted to Trix Langdon I could no longer doubt. His eyes followed her. His face brightened when she appeared and he was restless when she was not aboard the *Arcady*. Glances passed between them, quick mutual appreciation of humor or meanings patent to themselves alone when conversation flew about among us. They were always having little arguments, withdrawn from the rest of us, and though they were almost never alone together a certain comradeship and understanding seemed to have been established between them.

Chet had acknowledged that he did not under-

MUTINY ON BOARD

stand her. How could he? Neither he nor I knew the real Trix engaged in outside distractions about which we were carefully kept in the dark. Sometimes I thought it was this very inability to understand her that kept him continually fascinated. Her music helped. It seemed to me that Trix Langdon was, to Chet, like some lilting tune that possesses yet evades you, that sings and sings in your brain yet cannot be caught and held in any definite sequence of notes, and that once captured, becomes valueless.

Well, we should have to be back at Braceley by the tenth of September—a fortnight before school opened. Barry would go on to his college and Trix, I believed, was to be joined by her sister for a week of shopping in New York before the return to Pittsburgh.

And every time that girl went off on one of her secret expeditions I knew it gave Chetworth Curtis Havens pause. All his high and virtuous talk about minding our own business didn't fool me about the irritation and concern he experienced over every one of those town trips.

I lifted my cake pans out of the oven and spread cocoanut filling between layers, keeping my balance on the rocking floor with unconscious effort

FATHOMS DEEP.

but noting how the tins were beginning to knock about on the wall. The sea was pounding under the bow too, and the furled awning overhead made a drumming sound. The wind had veered to the northwest after the storm. By supper time it was blowing a gale and the sunset was gorgeous—a smear of molten gold across the west with cold, luminous silver above. In the clear air the harbor had a queer, almost artificial look, the yachts brilliantly white and sharply outlined, and somehow remote across stretches of blue-black, wind-whipped water.

“Some breeze,” declared Barry, coming down the deck ladder with the furled flags. “Y’ought to see the old lantern swing b’gosh. Fairly tipsy, it looks. Going over to put the *Dixie’s* light up now—want to come along, Pen?”

Pen took a flying leap into the dinghy which was trying to climb up on the step. “Old Alf was right,” she cried, tucking in her skirts; “he said it would blow, come sundown.”

I recalled something else old Alf had said. For the first time I had misgivings about that rope mooring which everybody except Byrd Jessup seemed to regard as so contemptible.

“Chet,” I commanded, “you go along with

MUTINY ON BOARD

Barry and bring back your night things. I want a man sleeping on this boat to-night. I don't like that wind."

Chet glanced at me to see if I were in earnest.

"All right, old lady. It's foolishness,—the *Arcady's* safe as a house—but if you feel that way one of us lads'll sleep aboard, of course."

Trix looked across at the diminutive *Dixie* bobbing about like a cork. "I could go over with Barry and let Doctor Havens have my cabin ——"

"Oh, for the love Mike!" scorned Barry, holding the dinghy until Chet should climb into it. "Do you think I'm afraid to stay on the *Dixie* alone? I'll be rocked to sleep like a baby. All set, Doctor Havens? Let's go."

"The *Dixie*," I reminded Trix, "has a perfectly safe chain and mushroom. We haven't. I am going to put a satchel beside my bunk with my watch and tooth-brush in it and my navy blue foulard. If we have to leave this boat suddenly I want to be prepared."

The gale increased as darkness drew down. That night we enjoyed, as Chet remarked, the true sportiness of salt-water houseboating. The wind shrieked past us. The awnings tugged. The windows rattled. The front door strained and

FATHOMS DEEP

groaned against its bolts. The gridiron clanged against the galley bulkhead like a bell-buoy in a December sea. Never for one instant was the *Arcady* still. She plunged and she bucked. She rolled. She bounced. Coming down the dogtrot one had to keep a hand on the partition at either side. And ever we twisted and turned to port and to starboard on that rope mooring which none of us completely trusted.

Yet scared as I was I wouldn't have missed the experience for worlds. Huddled on the after deck, and sheltered from the wind by the bulk of the cabin, we watched the madly tossing anchor lights of neighbor boats. Overhead the stars were incredibly bright and there were millions more than on ordinary evenings. Even the great square of Pegasus which usually makes me feel solemn with its suggestion of void upon void of distance, was star-sprinkled to-night. And at every plunge of the *Arcady* sparks of flame were flung over the stern deck from the phosphorescent sea.

I had rigged up a calico curtain discovered in one of the lockers, and which, strung on a wire down the length of the cabin, gave Chet and me each a bunk and comfortable privacy. But sleep was impossible. Rocked in the cradle of the deep

MUTINY ON BOARD

is a beautiful and lulling idea but just try it sometime in an eighty-mile gale with suspicious doubts about your mooring hawser and see how lulled you feel!

Three bells had struck and despite the pitching of the *Arcady* I had begun to feel pleasantly drowsy when I heard somebody pass stealthily along my side of the curtain and open the door to the after deck.

"Chet," I called anxiously, "is anything the matter?"

Chet started up in his bunk.

"What is it, Hetty? We are not adrift, are we?"

"I don't know. What's that, smashing against us astern?"

Chet leaped from his bunk.

"It's me," came Trix's voice from the after deck. "Didn't you hear these boats? They'll go to pieces."

I reached for my bathrobe. "Chet!" I reminded sharply, "your pajamas."

For he was dashing straight out on deck.

After I had found my coiffure cap and slippers I followed him. And there, if you please, were Chetworth Curtis Havens and that girl *both* in

FATHOMS DEEP

their pajamas and with their bare feet waving toward me as they hung across the rail. Never in all my life had my sense of propriety been so appalled.

Then something got me—the wild night and the excitement and the absurdity of the thing. I grabbed a waggling foot of each of them and hung on for dear life while they draped themselves over that rail and struggled with the boats—the *Arcady's* tender and a canoe belonging to young Tracy—which were in imminent danger of being smashed to bits against the stern of the houseboat.

“Auntie!” Pen’s shocked voice came from behind me. “What are you all doing? Why are Daddy and Trix out there in their nightgowns? Are we sinking?”

“Get the broom, Penny, and come help shove,” urged her parent. A mad lunge almost carried him overboard with me in tow.

For two solid hours we fought those boats, shoving them off when they piled up against the *Arcady* and keeping them apart when they tried to bestride each other. Chet and Trix left the rail long enough to get their sweaters which briefly—very briefly—draped them in the garb of convention. We had laughed ourselves faint when at

MUTINY ON BOARD

last the wind began to die down and dawn streaked the sky, and I went to the galley to make some coffee. Chet and Trix got into a gale of laughter again over each other's appearance as they set down their empty cups.

"Miss Hetty, you are the best sport. And you've left black-and-blue places on my right ankle that will last for life." Trix wiped her eyes. "I'll never forget this night. Did you ever have more fun?"

"I never did," I asserted, straightening my coiffure cap over my crimpers. "A life on the bounding main. . . . What is the matter, Penelope Havens?"

"I think it is perfectly disgraceful." Pen, withdrawn austere on a far corner of the port transom, had a frigid eye on her parent's pajamad legs. "If you could see yourself, Aunt Hetty. And Daddy and Trix all undressed. I wish—I just wish his Braceley trustees could see him now."

Chet choked over the cigarette he was lighting. "Gosh, I wish they could, Pen. Where's your sense of humor? Your virtue, my dear, is like that of which Charles Second remarked, 'we may admire without hope of ever being able to imitate.'"

Pen rose with dignity. "Well, you and Trix

FATHOMS DEEP.

are getting to be a little too much for *me*," she flung back at us as she stalked toward her cabin. "And if Aunt Hetty is so blind she can't see the way things are going on this boat, you needn't think you can fool me."

She banged her door.

CHAPTER XVII

DESCRIBES A MEETING WITH VOYAGERS WHO PROVE
PLEASANT COMPANY

YOU cannot very well cling to a person's bare heels all night and laugh yourself into spasms with her, and then be stiff and reserved next morning. The good fellowship of that midnight vigil had established a new relation of friendliness between Trix Langdon and myself. Trix had called me a good sport and such I would endeavor to be. And Trix, with the objectionable Rossiter and the dark uncertainties of Newark left out of the equation, wasn't a difficult person to like. It had been the constant battle between my impulse to like her and my determination not to trust her or approve of her that had kept me forever in a turmoil.

All summer, I reflected, I had been exactly like a motor-boat going round in circles and upheaved by its own swell. After all, it was my own assumption that Barry's dark hints and Trix's bitter remark about herself had anything to do with the New York and Newark excursions. Perhaps those

FATHOMS DEEP

trips were on perfectly innocent business; a surprise being planned for Mrs. Syd Rossiter, or a little gamble in stocks on the part of the Langdons; and the worry or trouble that Trix was carrying was about some other matter of which Leila was fully cognizant. I decided, that morning after the big blow, to stop fretting myself about Trix Langdon and enjoy the remaining weeks of houseboat life.

It was a wonderful morning anyway. The sea sparkled and everything had a new-washed look for Sunday.

"Here we are, and in the same place," I called gaily to old Alf who came rowing by.

"Beg pardon, ma'am," returned old Alf, a twinkle in his eye, "ye ain't in the same place."

"What's that?" I ran out on deck where Chet and Trix were lingering over their coffee. It had been pleasant to breakfast outdoors again and not in the stuffy cabin.

"Way th' boats is facin' now confuses ye like," explained old Alf, holding his rowboat up to the *Arcady's* step. "Ye are seventy-eight feet sou'east o' whar ye wuz last night."

"Gee whiz, he's right." Barry, who was pumping out the *Arcady*, pointed impressively. "See

how far we have got from the *Dixie*. I thought it seemed a long pull across this morning. And will you look where *Bigenough* is from here ——”

“But when did we move?” I gasped incredulously. “I never noticed it.”

“Must have been when those boats smashed up under the stern,” observed Chet. “We were probably drifting down on them.”

“Ye wouldn’t notice it,” chuckled old Alf. “Not till ye struck somethin’. Thar’s September gales a-comin’ soon an’ ef ye want thet chain an’ mushroom I have ’em handy.” He chopped away.

Chet looked thoughtful. “Maybe ——” he began.

“Nonsense,” I said. “If we rode out that blow last night, I guess we’ll ride out anything.”

We were all going over to the beach that morning to cheer Barry and Bob on at their labor of converting the *Lulu T. Holmes* into a yacht-like *Lorelei*. Chet had offered to carry planks and had gone on ahead. While waiting on the stern deck for Pen to return with the dinghy I watched a smart power-cruiser come in from the Sound. An old fellow in duck breeches and jumper ran forward to drop the anchor as the little yacht swept past, and a pretty girl with wonderful red-gold

FATHOMS DEEP

hair leaned over the rail and gazed with interest at the *Arcady*. She looked so friendly that I wondered if I knew her, but I could not recall having seen that particular boat in the harbor. And the pennant belonged to no club at the Port.

Bob Hamlin, in concession to those traditions of Port Madison which might be antagonistic toward noisy manual labor on the Sabbath, had forsworn his hammer and was to-day operating with a screw-driver. He had begged Chet to deposit planks tenderly instead of dropping them with a bang, and urged Barry to wield his paint-brush minus an accompaniment of whistled jazz. Aside from these precautions my New England eye perceived no special evidence of Sabbath observance. Bathers disported in the sea with the shrieks and shouts that are usual; sailboats darted about, making ready for the afternoon races, and motor cars roared up the club drive. The hill behind the Port rose darkly green and the sun-drenched bay stretched in blue and gold sparkles to the far-away Sound.

“This time next year,” prophesied Mr. Hamlin, lisping because of the screws in his mouth, “you and I, Susanna, will be gliding over yon twinkling water, our bunting streaming bravely, our dinghy

tumbling in our surging wake, our awning fluttering here abaft the cabin ——”

“Cabin?” inquired Mrs. Hamlin, looking about interestedly for it.

“—abaft the cabin, and beneath the awning you, my love, in a wicker chair and me in white pants and a yacht-cap forninst the wheel. Like this:” Mr. Hamlin struck an attitude illustrative of an intrepid yachtsman holding-her-up against a gale of wind and a raging sea.

“Faced toward the stern, I presume,” mentioned his lady.

Hastily reversing his position, Mr. Hamlin all but lost his balance on the crosspiece. Something glimpsed further down the beach seemed to have upset his poise. He gasped: “Holy mackerel, here’s Steve!” and disappeared from sight within the *Lulu T. Holmes*.

Sue turned, stared intently and then tore down the beach to fall with ecstatic shrieks upon the couple who were advancing from a dinghy drawn up on shore. She dragged the pair toward us; by one hand a tall, dark chap with kindly gaze through shell-rimmed glasses, and by the other that pretty red-haired girl I had seen on the smart power-cruiser.

FATHOMS DEEP

Of course,—I might have guessed: the little yacht was the *Sorceress* and these pleasant looking young folks were Sue's brother, Steven Burroughs, and his lovely wife, Bernice, about whom I had heard so much from Amelia Pomfret in Brookline. They had been at Marblehead for race-week and had stopped a night with Amelia on Corey Hill. It did seem delightful to meet people who had just come from Massachusetts and to hear somebody say Park Street and Copley Square and Reservoir Beacon. I could have talked with those two all day.

"Where's Bob?" asked Mr. Burroughs suddenly. "Home Sundays, isn't he?"

"Hiding!" Bob's wife gestured with a meaning thumb toward the steep side of the *Lulu T. Holmes* under whose ample shade we were standing and from within whose depths proceeded muffled sounds. "He's afraid to come out."

The skipper of the *Sorceress* craned his neck and squinted upward at the planking above his head. Then he drew back a few paces to get a better perspective.

"What is it?" he whispered with awe.

"It's Bob's new yacht."

"His ya ——"

PLEASANT COMPANY

Bob's head rose above the planking, a proud yet sheepish grin visible on his countenance.

"H'lo, old scout. What do you think of her?"

Barry, wielding a busy paint-brush, cast an oblique, anxious glance at the authoritative critic. Mr. Burroughs paced the ninety-odd feet around the leviathan. Prodded her seams with a penknife. Crouched beneath the overhang at the stern and peered upward. Strolled over and lifted the tarpaulin that covered the engine through whose vitals green grasses were sprouting. And then mounted a pile of packing boxes and stared down inside the hull. Still was he silent with awe—or some other emotion.

"Some boat, eh, Steve?" In Mr. Hamlin's voice could be detected wistfulness. His brother-in-law, balanced on the pile of boxes, produced pipe and tobacco pouch, filled the pipe carefully, lighted it, and continued to stare reflectively at the inside of the *Lulu T. Holmes*.

"You see," explained Bob vivaciously, "we're reinforcing her hull. Going to put the engine astern under the cockpit planking. Flush deck up for'ard here and nine-foot engine room aft of the cabin. Galley for'ard to port and lav opposite, to

FATHOMS DEEP

starboard. Cubby for the crew in her bow. Something like your *Sorceress*, y'know. But she beats the *Sorceress* by two feet extra cockpit length." Under the stimulus of his Vision, Bob was expanding visibly.

Steve Burroughs from his altitude on the boxes peered over a shoulder at the sands far below. "Quite some freeboard she has, Bob. Think you'll be able to see out—standing in the cockpit?" His tone was solemn but Sue, watching him closely, stifled a sound that resembled a snort.

The future skipper of the *Lorelei* refused to be dashed. "We shall cut her down a foot or so aft of the cabin bulkhead and run the rail along to the lazy-back. And there'll be nine foot head-room in the cabin—rather unusual feature, don't you think?"

"Very." Mr. Burroughs' left hand held his pipe and his right hand cupped his chin, fingers hiding whatever expression played about his mouth. "You aren't afraid, when you get a cabin on her—with all this freeboard—that she'll turn over in a broadside wind?"

Mr. Hamlin flung down his monkey-wrench. "See here, Steve Burroughs, if you think she's a fool proposition why don't you come out and say

PLEASANT COMPANY

so? Hang it all, don't stand there grinning behind your fist."

"I think she is just splendid, Steve." Little Mrs. Bernice stroked the steep side of the *Lulu T. Holmes*, the platinum circlet of her wedding-ring gleaming white against her pretty brown hand. "I think Bob has done a wonderful piece of work. Why, he'll have room to sleep five aboard. And when he gets his mast up and colors flying . . . what are you going to call her, Bob?"

"*Lorelei*," mumbled Mr. Hamlin with a grateful glance at his little sister-in-law. "Course we don't expect to get her in commission this year but we'll launch her Labor Day and I can work week-ends afterward. And Barry Langdon is coming down from college to help. We thought"—he glanced tentatively at the skipper of the *Sorceress*—"maybe you'd tow us over to City Island or somewhere, so we can keep her under a shed and work during the winter."

"Glad to, old chap. Bernice and I will be here a couple of weeks maybe, and old Derrick can put in some time on her. He's a famous old boat-builder. Shouldn't wonder if you make a good, seaworthy craft of her, Bob, and she is surely—impressive——"

FATHOMS DEEP

"Bob has worked hard, Steve." Sue's voice had an edge of warning. "He deserves a whole lot of credit. When you consider what a lubber he was two years ago—well, I—I'm proud of him."

Mr. Hamlin stared at his spouse, picked up his monkey-wrench and attacked a nut with ardor. And ardor was in the words his blithe baritone carolled:

"This world that we're a-livin' in
Is mighty hard to beat;
We get a thorn with every rose—
But ain't the roses sweet?"

"But *ain't* the roses sweet!" he repeated, sotto voce, smiling at his Sue. And the look that passed between them was a very lovely thing to see.

"And here, I imagine," observed Mr. Burroughs, descending from his pile of boxes, "comes that wild Pittsburgh flapper I've been hearing about."

Tennis racket under her arm, Trix was advancing down the path with young Tracy in tow. Her thin white skirt blew back against her knees and drawn down over it to her hips was a violet knitted silk slip-on that just matched her eyes—and revealed every curve of her. Her tawny mop of hair was flying about her face and earrings of violet blue glass swung almost to her shoulders.

PLEASANT COMPANY

I saw Chet glance from her to little Mrs. Burroughs and back again. I wondered if he was drawing comparisons as I was. Bernice in her simple white linen frock, and with soft coils of shining hair, was so eminently my ideal—and Chet's—of what young womanhood ought to be. Dainty and sweet and untouched by artificiality.

Trix greeted the Burroughs as she always did strangers. Straight, self-possessed gaze and brief handshake—flapper style. A casual, half-defiant manner that always seemed to me an affectation, for it was so different from the gentle courtesy she showed us all in intimate life aboard the *Arcady*. Determined as I was to feel kindly toward her, I resented her manner to lovely little Bernice Burroughs and was ashamed of that sheath-like sweater and the blue glass earrings.

But Bernice smiled at her cordially. "I think I met a friend of yours in Maine."

Trix wheeled with a startled look. "Who was that?"

"Mrs. Sydney Rossiter. (You remember, Steve—in Portland, on our way back from Monhegan?) She was in town overnight and she told us she was staying at some lake camp with—your sister, I think?"

FATHOMS DEEP

"Oh, yes, my sister Leila." Trix was watching Bernice narrowly. "You didn't go out to the camp? Or see Leila?"

"No. But Mrs. Rossiter lunched with us and when we told her we were coming to Port Madison she seemed to know all about your being here with Doctor and Miss Havens."

Sue claimed her sister-in-law's attention just then and Steve Burroughs turned toward Bob. "Happen to see anything of Syd Rossiter in New York this summer, Bob? His wife said he was back and forth between Pittsburgh and the New York office."

"Yep." Bob strolled across to us. "Saw Syd one day lunching at the McAlpin but he was with—with a friend, so I didn't speak to him."

Bob lighted a cigarette and flung the match away. He avoided looking at Trix.

"College chum of mine," Mr. Burroughs courteously took Chet and me into the conversation. "Married a Pittsburgh girl. How'd the old scout look, Bob?"

"Well and happy. Especially happy." Bob puffed at his cigarette and gazed at the harbor. Trix was studying the *Lulu T. Holmes* and Chet was studying Trix. His train of thought undoubt-

PLEASANT COMPANY

edly paralleled mine: that since Trix had lunched with Syd Rossiter not once but several times, now was her opportunity to mention her acquaintance with Mr. Burroughs' old college chum, and that deliberate silence about the matter argued an amount of secrecy in her relations with the husband of her sister's best friend that did not redound to her credit.

I had decided that morning to stop worrying and give those town trips of Trix Langdon's the benefit of the doubt. But there was no use. I simply did not trust this girl and that was all there was about it.

I saw Chet watching her a little wistfully all that day, and his puzzled look told me—knowing old Chet as I did—he was doing a lot of thinking.

And something that happened the same evening made me more worried than ever. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW FRESH TROUBLE IS BREWED FOR OUR SKIPPER UNDER THE CABIN LAMP

“WHERE on earth did those teacups come from?”

Flushed and tired I was surveying the table set for ten (including young Tracy) that occupied most of the floor space in the aft cabin.

Now that settled weather had come again Chet had let down the deck awning, spread rugs and set out chairs up there, and the Hamlins and the Burroughs had come over to watch the Sunday afternoon sailboat races. In a moment of impulsive hospitality I had invited everybody to remain for tea. If our deck-steward, refusing to join the lively party overhead, hadn't insisted on lending a hand, niftily tossing together a salad and beating up a cake, Skipper Mehitable Havens would have had an exhausting afternoon.

“I sent Barry over to the *Bigenough* for teacups,” she explained. “We hadn't enough and I didn't want to bother you. And Tom Tracy and

UNDER THE CABIN LAMP

Pen have gone for some of those purple asters in the Tracys' yard. That will add the finishing touch, won't it? I've set my chair here next yours so you can tell me when anything is needed and I'll hop to the galley."

Only a housekeeper scrambling together an unplanned meal for ten on a hot Sunday afternoon knows what such efficient help means. I smiled gratefully at our deck-steward.

"You are a good child, Trix. I don't know what I should do without you aboard."

With a little impulsive movement she laid her cheek against my arm.

"I do love you, Miss Hetty. I wish ——"

She broke away and straightened a spoon on the table. "I wish we could be better friends," she whispered.

Which left me speechless. My New England reserve cringed away from an emotional moment. And what could I say? A genial "Why, aren't we good friends?" would have been insincere. A fervent "I wish we could" would have admitted a contrary sentiment between us. So it was with relief I heard young Tracy's shout alongside:

"Here's your posies, Trix. What'll I do with 'em?"

FATHOMS DEEP

After supper Steven Burroughs invited everybody to go for a run across the Sound in his *Sorceress*. Of course the *Arcady's* skipper could not leave that pile of unwashed dishes but she insisted that the deck-steward depart with the rest.

I was hanging up the last dish-towel when they trooped aboard again. Barry popped his head in the galley doorway. "Where's Trix, Miss Hetty?"

"Why, didn't she go with you on the *Sorceress*, Barry?"

"No. She and Doctor Havens took Tom Tracy's canoe out. Thought they'd be back long before we would. Mr. Burroughs took us clear to New Rochelle."

Out in a canoe. And for two hours!

And for still another hour I sat on deck raking the expanse of harbor with unhappy eyes. The moon had come up late but it was an old moon, not very brilliant, and though several small sailboats were gliding about, no canoe could I spy.

All the yachts showed lighted ports and laughter wafted across the water from the club verandas. Barry got out the violin and played for us and the deep, emotional notes of Delilah's song to Sampson thrilled across the harbor.

UNDER THE CABIN LAMP

A lovely, lovely night for two, drifting in a canoe.

It was eleven o'clock when the canoe glided alongside and Trix and Chet met the chorus of banter from above with the information that they had three quarts of ice-cream.

"Don't you trouble to come down, Het," sang out my brother in the hilarious voice of a gay young spark who has had a glorious time. "Trix and I will get the teaspoons."

Thereupon, sounds of subdued mirth and rattling of silverware in the galley.

And then—silence.

What on earth were they doing? Everybody knows that ice-cream has to be dished out at once. No one, however, but Mehitable Havens seemed to be bothered. Pen and Barry were whispering together on the water-tank bench and young Tracy, bewitched now by flame-gold tresses, sat and adored young Mrs. Burroughs who cuddled contentedly against her husband's arm. They were laughing over some yarn Bob Hamlin was spinning. When I couldn't stand it another minute I slipped down the forward ladder.

Ten saucers of ice-cream were turning to an unpleasant mush, but the galley was deserted.

FATHOMS DEEP

I looked down the dogtrot. There, under the cabin lamp, those two were standing, Trix backed up against the table, hands turning her little handkerchief round and round by its edges; Chet staring down at her bent head. Under the strong light of the lamp her bobbed hair shone almost golden.

"You know I do, Trix," Chet was saying.

"It's impossible." I just caught her half-breathed reply.

"Why impossible, Trix?"

"I can't tell you."

"You must tell me."

She shook her head and continued to turn the handkerchief.

"You don't dare tell me it means nothing to you. Look at me."

My gracious but Chet could be masterful! I had never heard him speak like that. It was illuminating—to a sister.

He caught at the handkerchief. Their eyes met and held in a long, long look. The red rose in her cheeks, a slow flush that mounted to her forehead. I felt my own cheeks flush too, in a sort of vicarious thrill. . . .

"Say, where's that ice-cream I heard about?" Barry came clattering down the forward ladder

UNDER THE CABIN LAMP

and in at the front door. He almost fell on me. The two in the cabin were beside us instantly, protesting they were just on the way up the stern ladder with a tray. But I knew Barry had seen the tableau under the cabin lamp.

When the last spoonful had been scooped up and all the saucers had been licked by the mascot, Barry carried the dishes down to the galley sink for me. It was past midnight and somebody over at the club, counting Sabbath past at stroke of twelve, had put a jazz record on the phonograph. People were dancing on the club veranda and a shuffling of feet overhead told me our young people were fox-trotting on the *Arcady's* deck. I hoped it wouldn't sink the old *Arcady*; she creaked and quivered alarmingly as I rinsed ice-cream saucers in the galley.

But the racket overhead emphasized the stillness inside the houseboat. I heard Barry pause, on his way aft through the cabin.

"What you doing here, Trix—all alone?"

"I'm tired, Barry. I don't feel like dancing."

"Oh, come on up with the gang. What you moping down here for anyway?"

"I'm not moping. Do let me alone, Barry. Can't I rest by myself for a minute if I want to?"

FATHOMS DEEP

"Look here, Sis, what were you and Doc Havens doing out in the canoe all that time?"

"Doing? Drifting about, of course."

"Cut the highty-tighty—did he kiss you?"

"Barry Langdon, you are insulting. How dare you?"

In the galley I banged the soap-shaker against the dishpan to let the twins know I was there. The shuffling overhead continued and I heard young Tracy implore Pen to "do the kick after the third slide."

Barry's voice in the cabin was angry. "Who's balling things up now I'd like to know? Nix on twosing in the moonlight with old Havens. Yes, and making eyes at him too—oh, I saw you just now, Miss. And letting him sing at you ——"

"Sing at me?"

"Yeh. Other day while he was bailing out the dinghy he was singing that Morning thing that's going round this summer; and when he came to 'Morning in the eyes of you . . .' Well, I saw him all right."

"Oh, Barry," Trix breathed, and the hurt in her voice somehow hurt me too. I rattled the soap-shaker again. Very likely, however, the sound only assured them of my absorption in dish-

UNDER THE CABIN LAMP

washing. I heard Barry's voice rise on a note of alarm.

"Sis! You don't care anything—seriously—about Doctor Havens, do you?"

I scarcely caught her tremulous whisper: "And if I did, Barry?"

There was a moment's silence. Then:

"But, ye gods, Sis, can't you see what an infernal muddle that would get things into? Great Cæsar's ghost, you've got to cut out the sentiment stuff, old girl. When we're through here, we're through. You know that."

"How about you? Don't you ever expect to see Pen Havens again?"

"Pen's a kid. And I've two more years at college. If I want to see Pen some day there's plenty of time. And besides, you know very well I'm not the one concerned. There's no reason why I shouldn't see more of the Havens family later on. There's no complication about me——"

Of course one couldn't keep banging a soap-shaker forever. I hope Mehitable Havens would not stoop to listen on her own account; but when Chet's happiness was at stake . . .

"Yes, you are having a pretty good time of it, aren't you?" Trix was retorting rather acidly.

FATHOMS DEEP.

"But it hasn't been a very joyous summer for me—remember that. If you begrudge me a few bright interludes——"

"Well, don't make 'em too bright," advised her brother meaningly. (So Chetworth Curtis Havens was a bright interlude, was he, in whatever shadowy enterprise those two were pursuing?) I hung the soap-shaker on its hook—gently, and gently transferred a spoon from the hot suds to the dish-towel.

"Hang it, old girl," Barry's voice had a beseeching note now, "you can't mean you are serious about the thing?"

Silence.

"Are you?" he prodded.

I heard Trix move impatiently. "I'm tired of pretending. Tired. Tired. Tired. Barry—why couldn't we tell them?"

"Tell them! Tell the whole Havens tribe? Give the thing away now, after we have taken all this trouble? Not on your life! Spill everything now—after I've given up my Canadian canoe trip? After we've told packs of lies? You must be crazy. You keep away from Doc Havens hereafter, d'ye hear me? For heaven's sake use your good sense."

I heard the creak of the step and supposed Barry

UNDER THE CABIN LAMP

had left the cabin, but presently I heard him whistling between his teeth in a troubled, uncertain sort of way. The dancing overhead had ceased and a general clamor of voices seemed to presage a breaking-up of the party. Trix must have been out on the stern deck looking at the harbor for I heard the step creak again and her voice in the cabin.

“Buddy, suppose I did take it seriously. Suppose it meant—well everything to me? Haven’t I some right to consider myself in the matter?”

“Well, stall him off—you girls know how—and let him come to Pittsburgh later. We’ll have everything fixed by then ——”

“Don’t you see I’d have to tell him—if he came. He’d see Leila ——”

“Whew, of course! No, you couldn’t get away with it. Well, why not fix it by just corresponding with him and then tell him afterward ——”

“Afterward?”

“After you got married.”

“He hasn’t asked me to marry him. Is it likely?”—her voice rose passionately—“is it likely he’d ever ask me if he came to Pittsburgh and found out? Meet him somewhere, I suppose you mean, and marry him like a housemaid on her afternoon off—a man like that! And then let him

FATHOMS DEEP

know how I had deceived him. Oh, Barry, if you weren't so infuriating you'd be amusing." She laughed hysterically. And then her voice came, choked by tears. "No, Barry Langdon, I'll never see him again after I leave this houseboat. That's what's b-breaking my heart. His sister suspects something now—those Newark trips. If I could only make them understand ——"

"Yes, you little idiot, and suppose you blab it all to 'em; d'ye think you could make 'em understand? D'ye think their prim New England ideas would stand for it? Great godfreys, Sis, don't let the thing get out. It's too late now to talk about making outsiders understand. And there's Syd Rossiter to consider. He has some pride ——"

The girl was sobbing now. "Oh, poor Trix. Oh, poor Trix. She never meant to make all this unhappiness ——"

Barry plunged across the cabin.

"Poor Trix. Poor little Trix." It seemed that he must be petting her and that she was crying in his arms. "She's been a brave kid and we are all standing by her, aren't we? Buck up, old dear. Don't lose your nerve. Here's my hankie. Better fade away in your cabin—the bunch are coming down."

UNDER THE CABIN LAMP

I don't know whether anybody else in our fleet had a wink of sleep that night. The skipper, at least, lay awake until dawn.

My heart ached for Chet . . . for that girl too. Obviously she did care for him, though of course not as he did for her. I had not been close to Chetworth Curtis Havens for thirty-seven years without knowing when things went deep with him. In his eyes to-night as he had looked at Trix Langdon I had seen something of that young ardor of nineteen years ago. And Chet, again in love with a woman, would be the same Chet—nothing would stand in his way. I knew; I had glimpsed it in his look at her, there under the cabin lamp.

But what was it, standing in the way? Something too terrible to be told to Chet and me. Then surely something too outrageous for Leila Langdon to be any party to.

The conviction came to me, lying there sleepless and listening to the water whisper alongside as the *Arcady* shifted her position, that Leila Langdon knew nothing about this Newark business. I had given that letter, I remembered now, to Pen to mail and in some way Trix had gotten possession of it and had opened it. Leila Langdon had never seen that letter!

FATHOMS DEEP

I had received two communications from her, brief, pleasant notes telling of the benefit her quiet summer was bringing, and thanking me for my kindness to the twins who were having such a glorious time. If Trix Langdon was engaged in some business that must be kept from her sister's ken, she was capable of stopping letters that might convey information to Leila.

I wondered whether I had better write Leila again but shrank from the fearful possibility of encountering Trix a second time with that sharp coldness in her voice and my returned missive in her hand. No, I could not risk it.

There was no use talking to Chet. He was past talking to—I realized that now. Unless I had some good reason to offer why Trix Langdon should not become Mrs. Chetworth Curtis Havens I had better hold my peace. Surmises and suspicions would only turn him toward her the more, and against a prying and probably jealous spinster sister.

Well, if there was a good reason, I must somehow find it out. One day Chetworth Havens would thank me.

CHAPTER XIX

TELLS HOW A DETERMINED MARINER SETS SAIL IN PURSUIT OF PIRATE CRAFT

WHAT a wonderful arrangement it would be if humans, like hotel glassware, could occasionally go somewhere to be "newed"—have all their nicked edges nicely ground away. The week following that Sunday I felt all edges, and all the edges felt nicked. It is, as everybody well knows, the noble duty of a housewife to disseminate serenity and sunshine,—or, to put it nautically: a whole ship's company feels a drop in the barometer when weather around the helm is murky. But that week the skipper of the *Arcady* went about her labors with heavy heart and edgy temper. She couldn't enjoy the sunshine on the water or the putt-putt of the motor-launches. Or the anchor lights. Or any of the things that had so intrigued her in those first halcyon days of maritime existence.

All she longed for was to be home under the elms of Braceley, with Chetworth Curtis Havens content at the head of his school, swinging his golf

FATHOMS DEEP

club on the links, and dining out with pleasant people who added over the telephone: "And bring your music along." Would those untroubled hours ever return?

Chet had gone to Boston on a flying trip to see about some work on the school gymnasium but he had promised to be back for Labor Day week-end. I could see how much Trix missed him. She moped about and spent more time reading on deck than with the "gang" ashore. And Pen was cross because Barry was now so absorbed with the *Lulu T. Holmes* that he was aboard only for meals. Young Tracy, as Steve Burroughs maintained, was eternally underfoot on the *Sorceress* waiting for Bernice to step on him.

I had been waiting for the happy conjunction of a calm day and enough peaches to do some preserving; for I had no mind to tackle a preserving kettle and that oil stove with the *Arcady* rolling heavily. So, peaches and calm sea arriving simultaneously, I sent Pen ashore for some cloves and prepared for a busy session in the galley with the first lift of spirits to normal content that I had enjoyed in two weeks.

"Auntie!" Pen bounded out of the tender and raced up the dogtrot, "listen to this: I have a let-

PIRATE CRAFT

ter from Goldie Dunlop and what do you think ——”

“Any mail for me, Penny?” Trix called from the upper deck.

“Nothing at all, Trix. But come down and hear what Goldie says.”

Trix backed nimbly down the ladder. “Why, Miss Hetty, I didn’t know you had started the peaches. I haven’t a thing to do this morning—why didn’t you call me?” She whisked into one of my big galley pinafores and set to work, sticking cloves in the fruit I had been peeling.

Pen had handed me a letter from Chet and I began to read it aloud. It was mostly about work on the school building and its tone showed that Chet was busy and happy at Braceley and not pining with homesickness for the *Arcady*. But he wound up with: “and tell Trix I won’t forget what I promised to bring her.”

“Now, Auntie,” Pen was bursting with impatience, “will you listen to my news about Goldie? She is back in New York and is coming to see us. They are planning to motor to Hempstead and are going to drop Goldie on their way so she can spend the day with us ——”

“When?”

FATHOMS DEEP

The slippery peach escaped from Trix's clutch and rolled across the galley floor.

"To-day. Goldie wrote this last night. She ought to be here by eleven. I'm going over to the club to wait for her."

"Oh, Pen," lamented I, "my peaches!"

"It won't matter, will it, Auntie? Trix and I were to have lunch on the *Sorceress* and those darling Burroughs won't mind if we bring Goldie along. It will be a gorgeous spree for her—taking a trip on the *Sorceress* this afternoon, and we'll be out of your way."

Trix was consulting her wrist-watch. "You take Goldie in my place, Pen. I've a notion to go to town to-day. I—I need a fall hat." She was unbuttoning the pinafore as she spoke.

"A fall hat!" Pen stared. "Why, it's the middle of summer ——"

"No indeed it isn't. It's almost Labor Day. See if Goldie Dunlop hasn't a velvet hat on. You know my hat got drenched last time I went to town ——"

"But Trix, how about Goldie?" Pen looked distressed. "She has talked so much about seeing you ——"

Trix shrugged her shoulders. Perhaps she surmised that all of Goldie Dunlop's talk about her

PIRATE CRAFT

had not been pleasant talk. "Goldie is your pal; Muriel Dunlop is mine. Why should I put myself out to wait around here for that youngster? If Miss Hetty will forgive me for running away ——" She glanced at me.

"Oh, it doesn't matter at all." I was also unbuttoning my galley apron. "I have decided not to do the peaches to-day—it's too rough."

"Auntie! There isn't a ripple. The sea is like glass ——"

"There's wind coming, Pen. I feel it. And if the stove should get ablaze without your father aboard, there might be an awful catastrophe. Besides"—I avoided looking at anybody in particular—"I've a notion to go to town myself. Ford and Laylor are advertising a summer sale of caracul coats. Only a hundred and fifty. If they are anything like the pictures they are way beyond coats I could find in Boston, in November, at twice the price ——"

"Fur coats. . . . And fall hats." Pen was bewildered and provoked. "I never heard such craziness—and Goldie coming, and all. It looks polite, I must say."

I was whisking about, banging the ice-box door and pushing lockers shut with my knee. **Trix**

FATHOMS DEEP

stood staring at me, a puzzled expression in her eyes.

"You take Goldie aboard the *Sorceress*, Pen," I directed. "You will have a splendid day. And tell Barry he can have these peeled peaches for his lunch with some of the cold chicken. . . . You won't object to company, will you, Trix? I'd like your opinion on those furs."

"Why, I'd love to have you along, Miss Hetty," Trix responded enthusiastically (though she hardly looked it). "We have just time to make the ten o'clock trolley if we hurry."

In Pen's cabin where I changed my dress, I slipped a fat roll of bills into my bag. Not for fur coats but because I intended to stick to that girl if it meant a taxi to the farthest environs of Newark, New Jersey. And find out why she went there. My mind was made up. For almost twenty years I had protected Chetworth Curtis Havens from unfortunate entanglements in order that he might, with honor and dignity, pursue his career, and he wasn't going to wreck himself on the reef of an unsuitable marriage if Mehitable Havens could prevent it.

We chattered amicably on the train and decided to lunch at the Waldorf which I had never visited

PIRATE CRAFT

(and secretly wanted to compare with our Copley Plaza at home). I was pursuing my comparisons and staring with some awe at the magnificent distances of the dining-room, when Trix rose from her chair and begged to be excused a moment. She wanted to telephone on a matter of business.

Almost immediately she was back. "The man was out but I left word where to find me in case he returns before we leave here. It was nothing very important. Miss Hetty, do look at the new long skirts."

Both Trix and I were captivated by the brand new autumn modes that were sweeping into the restaurant. Fashion had whisked her wheel and almost overnight skirts had descended from knee to ankle. "There won't be a flapper left by November," Trix prophesied. "Did you ever see such stately draperies? And their bobbed hair pinned up under nets. I feel terribly countrified, don't you?"

I laughed companionably. I was rather enjoying the little spree and the rolls were delicious. "My skirts won't have to come down far, child; and I guess Boston will still stand the strain of my coiffure. I haven't altered it since 1908 when pompadours went out."

FATHOMS DEEP

"You look sweet, Miss Hetty—you always do." Trix smiled at me and there was something very winning and sincere in her smile. She persisted in liking me and seeming to want me to like her. I wished she wouldn't. If she had seemed antagonistic it would have made me less uncomfortable, trying to spy on her. But Chet meant so much to me—and how was I to trust her?

We were leaving the dining-room when a page came toward us, intoning in that flat way they do, "Miss Langdon? Miss Lang-don!"

"My telephone call." Trix beckoned to the boy. "Will you find a seat somewhere, Miss Hetty? I'll be with you directly."

She hurried off in the boy's wake and instead of hunting up a chair I followed right along. She did not know I was behind her and left the door of the booth partly open.

"That you, Syd?.....I'm here at the Waldorf.....No, don't come up. Miss Havens is with me. Anything new?.....You say your wife is coming to-morrow? What for?.....Of course she'll go to Newark—what else is she coming down for?.....Yes, there's an ordeal ahead for all of us. We've got to face it—soon now, too....."

PIRATE CRAFT

Well, September will see the end of this business, thank heaven."

I lost the next words. Then Trix's voice rose a little and I caught:

" . . . can't stand the strain much longer. You're right, it's hardest on Trix.....No, I won't meet you to-day; I'll go right over to 120 Perch Street from here.....Oh, I'll get rid of her all right; she's just shopping . . ."

I had found a seat and was—rather breathlessly—occupying it when Trix came back from the booth.

She was, oh, so sorry to have to leave me, but would I mind? Something had come up about a matter of business that concerned Leila and herself and she had made an appointment for three o'clock. It was too bad about the caracul coats but she was sure her advice couldn't have any particular value—our tastes in dress were so different. And she would be home by supper time. Maybe get the same train I did. . . .

"One-twenty Perch Street. One-twenty Perch Street." I committed the address to memory as I walked west toward Sixth Avenue. Of course it was the place in Newark. I was going to take a chance anyway.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH OUR SKIPPER, HAVING ABANDONED THE SHIP, EXPLORES STRANGE COUNTRY

UPHELD by a virtuous sense of duty toward a brother tottering on the verge of peril, and also (though I would not have admitted it) by an exciting suggestion of adventure in my nefarious undertaking, I entered one of the big shops at Sixth Avenue and Thirty-fourth.

There I outfitted myself with garments that I fondly believed would perfectly disguise the genteel and Bostonish ensemble of Mehitable Havens of Braceley, Massachusetts.

The shop was closing out at a ten-dollar price some of those languorous looking wraps of black silk with dangling knee-deep fringe that had been considered so alluring at spring's beginning. I bought one, and invested another five dollars in a bargain table hat in the new poke shape, an outrageous piece of millinery for a New England spinster approaching fifty, but possessed of a brim that almost eclipsed the visage. Over the brim I draped a huge and floating veil of black near-lace.

STRANGE COUNTRY

In the women's waiting-room up-stairs I donned this regalia; made a parcel of my serge jacket and straw toque and checked the parcel at the Thirty-third Street terminal of the Hudson Tubes.

Clothes certainly can alter the outward semblance of personality, for when I changed at Grove Street an unpleasant male creature, obviously charmed by the fringed cape and mysterious lace veil, tried his best to flirt with me, strutting back and forth and ogling me hopefully. I wondered what sort of experience Trix must have in those short skirts and earrings and with that mask of powder and lip-rouge.

I am familiar with Newark, having made many a winter visit at the home of a friend in Montclair, so I had resigned myself to thirty minutes of torture. Probably in all the system of world subways there is no more dismal ride than the ride through that Newark Tube. The seats are too high and their backs are too low. There are window shades in those cars but I have never seen one of them lowered to soften the hideous glare that shocks your optic nerve when the train emerges from the tunnel. Rows of disconsolate looking people sit elbow-to-elbow and blink patiently in that glare. How unlike our pleasant Boston cars with their

FATHOMS DEEP

comfortable seats and window shades carefully adjusted by watchful guards to the tempered light of a Pullman. (And of course the dirty car windows are one of the painful things a visiting Bostonian endures in New York.)

When I came out of the Tube station at Newark I made inquiry of a policeman about Perch Street. He advised a taxi but I had no mind to attract attention to myself by driving up to the place I sought in any taxi, so I took a trolley instead. A short ride with a transfer to another line brought me to the corner of Perch Street and the trolley conductor informed me that number 120 would be half-way down the block.

Perch Street was like a hundred other Newark streets, with low-stooped brick houses and unimpressive apartment buildings sandwiched between. Number 120 proved to be one of the apartments; a three-story affair with a bulging bay across the front and chipped brownstone steps sadly in need of a broom. But the neighborhood, if not smart, was respectable enough. Young mothers wheeled perambulators in which packages of groceries crowded the small occupants. Older children were roller-skating on the sidewalks. The curtains in the windows were of scrim and dotted net—not of

STRANGE COUNTRY

cheap lace. A middle-class householders' neighborhood, I decided, lingering under an awning in front of an optician's shop across the street from number 120.

I stood there several minutes trying to think what to do next. In the optician's window was a tray of artificial eyes—blue eyes, hazel eyes, brown eyes, all staring in an alarmed way in different directions, a ghastly effect. But the eyes gave me an inspiration. I stepped into the shop and asked a woman in charge of the counter if I could have my spectacles repaired. I had dropped them in the galley sink and chipped off an edge of one of the lenses. At the time I had been enraged, but now I perceived the accident had been a part of the mysterious workings of destiny. That broken lense gave me a chance to sit and watch, through the optician's window, the house across the way.

The woman, who was chatty and pleasant, carried my spectacles to somebody at the back of the shop and asked me to have a chair and make myself comfortable. I assured her I was in no hurry since I had to wait for a friend who was paying a call on the block. (Of course, in a way, I was. So it was no absolute untruth.)

The minutes went by and my spectacles were

FATHOMS DEEP

handed to me and paid for. I kept my gaze carefully on the house opposite but nothing particular happened. A man came out with a dog and walked toward the corner, and a delivery van drove up to leave a package. That did interest me for the van was a smart and shiny one with the name of an expensive Manhattan shop on its plum-colored side. And a brass-buttoned fellow dashed up the steps with an enormous box of what must have been costly feminine raiment. The box was taken in by an elderly woman in a neat black gown and crisp apron; the sort of competent and respectable retainer you would expect to see at the door of an old-fashioned well-to-do family.

That was curious. Somebody in the cheap little apartment house had a perfectly trained servant and ordered wearing apparel from one of New York's most exclusive shops.

Presently I saw the perfect maid at the third-story bay window, adjusting the shades.

And then Trix Langdon herself at the window.

From the street level the sill of the third-story window cut off all but the head and shoulders of a seated person in the room . . . but the person was Trix, all right. The afternoon sun slanted on her bobbed hair, making it almost golden. She

STRANGE COUNTRY

had exchanged her blue serge street frock for a vivid cerise negligee which made her small face look paler than its wont.

And as she sat languidly in the window, she smoked a cigarette! So all that virtuous talk about giving up cigarettes had been a pose assumed for Chet's benefit. She smoked cigarettes in Newark. And very probably the gorgeous negligee had just arrived in that box.

But who was the white-aproned retainer? And who was her employer at the Perch Street apartment? If Trix was visiting there she certainly made herself very much at home. The people she knew there must be very intimate friends indeed.

For some time Trix sat in the window, her head turned toward the room so that I caught only the sunlight on her hair and the gleam of a cerise shoulder. She was talking to someone in the room and as she talked she lighted and smoked a second cigarette. And a third. Occasionally, as she flicked an ash on the sill, she glanced at the street outside and the casual glance and careless gesture with the cigarette seemed to indicate a conversation of no particular earnestness. In her pose—as much as I could see of it—there was a suggestion of bored weariness.

FATHOMS DEEP

The shop being without customers at the moment, the woman in charge strolled over and stood beside me.

"Your friend up there?" she asked.

"Up where?" I caught myself in time and did not betray my inward start. I must have been looking rather too intently at the third-story window of number 120.

The woman glanced up at the window in question. "I saw you looking up there and thought maybe the party you are waiting for was calling there."

I mumbled something about "further down the block" and added, "I was admiring her hair—it's pretty with the sun on it." Indeed I had never noticed that golden glint in Trix's hair, except once—under the cabin lamp the other evening.

"Yes, she's awful pretty," said the woman. "Kind of sad about her too ——"

"You know her?" I inquired with interest.

"No—that is to say, not personally. She's a Mrs. Briggs. Husband's an engineer—gone to India. She's going too, after a bit, when she's able to take the trip. She isn't very strong and hardly ever goes outdoors. She lives there with her—sort

STRANGE COUNTRY

of companion or working-housekeeper, I guess. Fine woman, that housekeeper. Came in here to have her glasses fixed and then, another time, to have a cigarette case repaired. The hinge was broken and there are no jewelers around here, so we fixed it for her."

"You say the younger one never goes out?"

"Well, very rarely. Sits in the window sometimes, like to-day. Most always the housekeeper sits there, sewing."

My informant paused, her inquisitive attention attracted by something in another window two houses along. Evidently she killed time between customers by watching her neighbors.

"She certainly has pretty hair." I recalled wandering attention to the subject in hand.

"Who—oh, that little Mrs. Briggs? Yes. Company there to-day, I guess. She has a lot of company. Swell folks. Some of 'em come in taxis. And flowers! Wonderful flowers goes to that apartment sometimes; I've seen the old lady take 'em in. Those long-stem roses that stick way out of the box, and violets in purple wrappers—you know what violets cost this time of year! Caterer's stuff goes in too—times she has company. Mostly though they are quiet people. You don't

see anything for days and days but the old lady sewing in the window."

"Briggs!" I muttered.

"Yes, that's the name the old one gave when she left the cigarette case to be mended." The woman hurried back to her place behind the counter as a customer came into the shop.

And a minute afterward, looking up, I saw the cigarette Trix had been smoking come flying out of the window, and Trix's bobbed head go down on her hands. The cerise-clad shoulder was shaken by terrible sobbing.

Someone within the room had come close to her and seemed to be arguing or remonstrating. The person (probably the elderly maid) was hidden from me by the window curtain but I saw a hand stroking and smoothing the bowed bobbed head. Then whoever it was caught up the little shaking cerise-wrapped figure and they moved back, out of sight, within the room.

And at that very instant appeared at the street door, two floors below, the elderly maid. She came out and picked up the evening newspaper that a boy had tossed on the step and vanished inside with it.

Who was in that third-story room with Trix?

Who had made her cry?

For five minutes more I sat, rigid, in the optician's window. An altercation was going on at the counter about some repairs that had evidently not been satisfactory, and nobody was paying any attention to me. I looked at my watch. It was after four. What had I better do next? It would be past six when I got back to Port Madison, even if I started at once.

I glanced up at the window of number 120 again. There was Trix, standing up, apparently quite composed and now in her blue serge frock and little rakish hat. She was talking very earnestly to the person back in the room. There was no evidence of agitation in her attitude and I even saw her smile. Then she disappeared and after a brief interval she came out of the street door and walked rapidly up the block, an intent look in her face.

With a nod of thanks to the woman behind the counter (she was still arguing with her customer), I went out of the shop and straight across the street to number 120. Climbing the steps I scanned the name plates over the letter-boxes at one side of the tiny vestibule. On the topmost box

was a card on which was written in small script—it did not look like Trix's hand:

Mrs. George Bascom Briggs.

CHAPTER XXI

TREATS OF MAIDS, MYSTERIES, AND EMOTIONS DEEP AS THE SEA

THAT return journey from Newark to Port Madison will ever remain a hideous memory. Withdrawn behind my lace veil and funereal fringes I endured with stoical aloofness the unspeakable discomfort. Emerson's definition of a great man is one who in the midst of the crowd can maintain with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. But Emerson never traveled in a subway at the evening rush-hour of a muggy summer day. And I am sure the Concord philosopher never had any such pestering problem to nag at his solitude as had Mehitable Havens that miserable August afternoon.

What to do about it? What move to make next?

To face Trix Langdon with my knowledge of the Newark ménage and order her either to make some satisfactory explanation of the Perch Street business or to remove herself from the *Arcady*?

Or to tell Chet what I had discovered?

After all, what, exactly, had I discovered? That

FATHOMS DEEP.

Trix, posing as Mrs. George Bascom Briggs, was maintaining an establishment in Newark where she entertained friends who sent in violets (in August) and where she gave an effect, to the neighbors, of established residence, helped out by the constant presence on the premises of a capable companion-housekeeper.

But why?

What necessitated all this expense and secrecy? Any sinister conclusion I might have arrived at was precluded by the person and presence of that indisputably respectable elderly woman who played a part in the mystery. That elderly maid, I would have staked my life, was above reproach. I began to wonder if Leila, after all, was not concerned in this affair. Whether it was not something much bigger and more serious than anything my suspicions or imagination could have conceived.

Could Trix Langdon have been married to some Briggs? And was she, because of some twist of divorce laws of the State of New Jersey (about which, of course, I knew nothing at all), and with the assistance of her family and the Rossiters, establishing residence in New Jersey by means of the Perch Street apartment and the housekeeper, while disporting, herself, in more congenial fashion

DEEP AS THE SEA

at Port Madison? For naturally, prolonged sojourn in that mean little Newark apartment would bore Miss Trix Langdon to a state of frenzy.

Or (some of Barry's remarks about Leila, safe in Maine, recurred to me), was Trix with Barry's and Syd Rossiter's assistance putting something of the kind over, unbeknownst to her sister?

My mind began to go round again in circles like that unfortunate motor-boat upheaved by its own swell. By the time the Tube train had reached Thirty-third Street my poor head was aching fiercely and I began to feel so tired I could scarcely crawl.

I retrieved my hat and jacket and in a dressing-room of the Pennsylvania station changed back into these decent habiliments, making a parcel of the fringed wrap, the preposterous hat and the vampirish veil. I knew I must not carry this bulky package aboard the *Arcady*, for Pen would be certain I had fetched home one of the caracul coats and insist upon instant inspection of my purchase. So I took a taxi at Port Madison station and stopped at the post-office where I dispatched the parcel to my colored laundress at Braceley. She, at least, would enjoy the awful wrap, hat and veil albeit I should be compelled to see that odious

FATHOMS DEEP

outfit at the back door of Braceley House every Monday for months to come.

It was half after six when I reached the club float and, finding nobody to meet me, got into the club launch and had myself conveyed to the *Arcady*. Unbelievably, the harbor looked just the same. Flags flew just as crisply. Tenders darted about just as gaily. Motor-cars were rolling up to the club with lively parties for supper. And a clean salt breeze blew in from the Sound, bringing refreshment to my subway-and-lace-veil-stifled lungs.

Alongside the *Arcady* I found our whole ship's company in swimming. Chet, back from Boston, was joyously splashing about. And there, if you please, poised on the upper deck rail for a long dive into the sea,—was Miss Trix Langdon!

She was shouting a gay challenge to Bob Hamlin to be a sport and dive with her from that lofty position and below in the water Chet was urging her to come on down to him.

Had I seen that girl, three hours earlier, in a cerise kimono, sobbing bitterly, or had I not?

But at supper I noticed the deepened violet shadows under Trix's eyes; her look of weariness and strain. The look that made her seem older

DEEP AS THE SEA

than her twenty-two years. She and Chet had run across each other on the train, I discovered. And the Dunlop girl had not turned up after all, but had telegraphed, putting off her visit until after Labor Day. I felt a lot better after a cool salt water sponge and a change to fresh garments. And two cups of tea revived me wonderfully. Never so peaceful and beautiful had seemed our harbor, a soft breeze ruffling an amethyst sea with purple shadows and the anchor lights winking out one by one after the boom of the sunset gun.

How perfectly happy I could have been on this houseboat if nobody from Pittsburgh had come to fret and harass my spirit!

After supper I had a very good opportunity to launch my offensive. Pen and Barry rowed over to the *Bigenough* and Chet, returning from some letter-writing on the *Dixie*, got out his pipe and lounged on the stern veranda where Trix was sitting alone. But I was too tired, mentally and physically, to risk anything disturbing. And lifelong habit of repression engenders hesitancy in matters of attack and offensive. One shrinks from any situation approaching the dramatic—or that unfaceable horror, a scene.

That there would be a scene of sorts, if in Chet's

FATHOMS DEEP

presence I confronted Trix Langdon with the order to explain Mrs. George Bascom Briggs—or depart from the *Arcady*, I very well knew. And upon Chetworth Curtis Havens, I miserably acknowledged, I could no longer depend. He might, in his rejuvenated ardor and obstinacy of nineteen years ago, be quite capable of leaving the houseboat with that girl and not coming back again.

At any rate, I realized I was in no state to argue clearly with myself or anybody else about anything, so I held my peace, languidly moving about inside the houseboat and allowing those two on the stern veranda to enjoy the twilight.

They did not talk. Chet sat and smoked his pipe, and Trix knelt on the bench, elbows on the rail, and looked out at the harbor. By and by Pen and Barry came back with the Hamlins and a few minutes later Steven and Bernice Burroughs drew alongside in their tender. There was singing on the upper deck and Bob Hamlin rendered with sentimental pathos that inevitable end-of-summer favorite: Tosti's Good-bye (which always gives one the blues, gazing out over a near-September sea).

Then it was Chet's turn. His deeper, richer

DEEP AS THE SEA

voice was a perfect thing, that night, unaccompanied—and with the harbor stretching still and wide beyond our shadowy retreat beneath the awning.

“Calm as the night; deep as the sea,
Should be thy love for me. . . .”

I saw a flutter of white in the shadows. Trix, who had curled up on the bench astern, rose and stumbled blindly past me. I heard her choked sob. She slipped down the stern ladder and disappeared inside the cabin.

Chet finished the song and then he, too, slipped down the ladder. I felt restless and nervous. I could not go down there but I knew they must be in the cabin together. I got up from my deck chair and paced aimlessly about, presently pausing up by the forward rail to gaze absently at the Scorpion, low in the southern heavens and almost ready now to vanish before the advance of winter constellations.

And there, below me on the bow veranda, were my brother and Trix Langdon. The girl was crying and Chet's arms were around her and his deep and tender voice was murmuring to her.

That night I lay sleepless again through long

FATHOMS DEEP

hours. When the ship's clock struck the third hour after midnight I arose and wrapping a warm bathrobe over my night-dress, slipped out on the stern veranda.

It was comforting out there; dark and still, the water lapping softly under the *Arcady's* stern and our dinghy floating quietly on inky ripples. The anchor lights all about scarcely quivered in the placid sea. Over the hill of Port Madison Orion was sweeping upward. I always thrill when, at summer's end, I happen to glimpse Orion in the still night watches, and now the great constellation made me think of Braceley with bare branches of elms against a winter sky and snow-wrapped country stretching away to the dim blue line of hills. Would Braceley and winter still hold for me this misery of worry about Trix Langdon? Was she hereafter to be a fretting element in that one-time environment of peace and content?

A muffled sound of oars struck my ear. Who could be rowing in from the Sound at this hour? And so cautiously too—the dip of the blades was almost noiseless. I peered curiously and a bit fearfully at the flat-bottomed boat passing a short distance astern of the *Arcady*.

Something about that figure slumped over the

DEEP AS THE SEA

oars made me start. I sent a commanding whisper across the water.

“Chet!”

The figure turned and the prow of the rowboat shot toward the *Arcady*. Chet’s hand reached up and caught the step.

“Hetty, is that you? What on earth are you doing out here, this time of night? Is anybody sick?”

“Chetworth Curtis Havens, what I want to know is why *you* are rowing around Long Island Sound at three o’clock in the morning. Where have you been?”

“Why, nowhere in particular, Hetty. Just rowing about ——”

“Rowing about! For pity’s sake, what for?”

“Oh—just for exercise, Hetty. Couldn’t sleep somehow so I—why, I thought I’d take the tender and row round a bit.”

Chet had shipped his oars. He was holding to the *Arcady*’s step with one hand; the other he lifted and swept backward over brow and hair, a gesture I have seen him use often when fagged or discouraged. Then he dug in his pocket for his pipe, and holding the boat by an elbow on the *Arcady*’s step, he filled the pipe and lighted it.

FATHOMS DEEP

The flare of the match revealed his face, haggard and drawn, but he smiled at me—Chet's kind and whimsical smile.

"What are you doing, out here all by yourself, Hetty, at such an ungodly hour?"

Now that a wonderful opportunity had arrived to impart my fears and discoveries to Chetworth Curtis Havens—well, I simply couldn't do it! His haggard face; his affectionate smile; his comical glance at my huddled bathrobed figure communing with the night, sent a quiver of tenderness through my heart. I couldn't summon the uncompromising hardness to hurt him who already looked so hurt, or the courage to bring down on my head the storm of anger and protest, or whatever emotion the story might arouse in Chet, that would certainly follow.

I put it off a little.

"I had a headache. So I came out here where the air was fresher. Chet . . . I saw Trix crying to-night. And I saw—I saw you together on the forward deck."

Chet knocked out his pipe, shoved it in his pocket and picked up the oars. He pulled the tender around, astern of the *Arcady*, to the port side. Trix's cabin was on the starboard side—the same side as the landing steps. She was probably asleep

DEEP AS THE SEA

at this hour of the night, but of course she might not be. When Chet had pulled the rowboat under the port rail of the veranda he said to me in a voice that was cold:

"If that's what is worrying you, Hetty, set your mind at ease. Trix has refused me."

We Havens cannot be insincere with each other, even to proffer sympathy in moments of recognized hurt. There was nothing I felt able to say so I stupidly echoed:

"Refused you!"

"Refused me, Hetty—don't sound so incredulous. Everybody doesn't dote on me the way you do, you know. For instance girls of twenty-two don't consider marrying men old enough—almost—to be their fathers such a tremendous ——"

"Was that the reason she gave you?"

"Well, when I inferred it to be her reason, no other seeming to be forthcoming, I was told that now I had imbibed the idea I might as well accept it as the correct one—or something like that."

"Heartless!"

"Not at all, my dear Hetty. Entirely meant as kindness. Saving me argument (and I'll admit I was prepared to argue) by establishing a plausible

FATHOMS DEEP

premise in place of a more convincing reason that apparently could not be divulged ——”

Could not was right!

“Then you have no idea what the real reason was?” I inquired.

“Not yet. But I intend to find out. That little girl is troubled about something ——” Chet’s tone changed; the bitter note of mockery left it. “She is in dire trouble, poor child. And I’ll swear it is somebody else’s trouble she is carrying. And if it were her own trouble”——his low voice vibrated with the intensity of his feeling——“even if her youth and her ignorance of life had involved her in some hideous tangle, do you think it would make any difference to me? Why, I love her, Hetty. You don’t know anything about it. And you have never liked Trix ——”

“I never said I didn’t like her. One can’t help liking her. But ——”

Chet raised a silencing hand. “You have never tried to understand her—I know that. You have never been willing to see the real Trix; her splendid intelligence, her sweetness, her rare loveliness of spirit, the woman she might develop into ——”

A little cold wind before the dawn swept down the harbor. Chet lifted his face to it; took off his

DEEP AS THE SEA

cap and let it ruffle his hair. The clock in the cabin clanged eight sharp notes.

“Oh, well,” and even in the dark (I knew Chet’s voice so well) I could see the whimsical smile on the face raised to mine, “you needn’t worry that faithful heart of yours any more, Hetty. The thing is impossible, I’m told. I am not to cherish any hope. I’m not to travel to Pittsburgh—very emphatic about that. And I’m to forget—forget, mind you!—this summer on the *Arcady*. A happy interlude—that’s what I am invited to consider it.”

Interlude. I sat up straight. I could have told Chet a few things. I could have told him the whole thing. But what use now? That girl had taken the responsibility out of my hands. I thanked her for that anyway.

I listened to Chet’s progress across to the *Dixie* and heard him climb aboard. But I sat there, huddled in my bathrobe on the after deck of the *Arcady* a long, long time. . . . Until the dawn broke. Until the sultry August sun came up, a crimson disk, behind the green-fringed crest of the Port Madison hill.

CHAPTER XXII

TELLS HOW, BESET BY TEMPEST, WE ARE IN DIRE
PERIL

PROBABLY the only member of our fleet who enjoyed Labor Day week-end was Pen.

Trix pretended enthusiasm about holiday gaieties at the club, but if ever there was a broken-hearted girl, that girl was Trix Langdon. Her eyes had a far-away look and shadows under them told of sleepless nights. Frequently I heard her sobbing in her cabin. She had the look of one waiting and dreading imminent catastrophe. She avoided Chet, but Chet spent all his time on the *Dixie*, professing furious interest in the long-neglected Simple Synonyms for Elementary Grades that would never, now, be ready for autumn publication.

Barry was in the deepest depths. The *Lulu T. Holmes*, proudly launched amid a cheering throng on Labor Day, slid twenty yards or so out into the water and then went to the bottom. And Barry and Bob, disgusted, sold their buried hopes

BESET BY TEMPEST

to a salvage company who (Bob declared with bitterness) "Could heave the damn thing up and do what they damn pleased with her." By afternoon Bob was figuring with a pencil stub ways and means by which he could almost certainly own an honest to goodness thirty-foot cruiser—when the new models were exhibited at the 1923 Motor-boat Show.

But poor Barry was disconsolate. He jingled a now useless pocketful of nails and gazed pensively at the rain-pelted harbor where the *Lulu T. Holmes* lay submerged, a forlorn red flag sticking up at high tide to warn mariners of the derelict below.

"*Let it rain,*" he uttered darkly. "The more rain the better. It's Labor's day, ain't it? They got what's comin' to 'em, for once."

Two days of balmy weather, however, followed the celebration of Labor's emancipation, and I pickled my peaches at last and had them nicely packed in jars ready to ship to Braceley. I was pasting on the last label when old Alf came rowing by. He spied me at the galley window and brought his disreputable old boat alongside, twinkling his eyes at me.

"Marnin', Miss Havens. Goin' to blow gosh-amighty come nightfall—want me to hitch on thet

FATHOMS DEEP

chain an' mushroom fer ye? Ye're goin' to need 'em bad."

I glanced at the brassy sky. "There won't be a squall to-day, will there?" I asked anxiously. Chet had gone to town and it had seemed such fine weather that I had told Barry to run along with Pen and join the party on the *Sorceress*. Steven Burroughs was taking her out of the harbor to-day. One of the rules Chet had made at summer's beginning was that at no time should both Barry and himself be at such distance from the *Arcady* that quick return was not possible in the event of a squall.

"Goin' to blow—and blow hard—'fore night-fall," old Alf nodded emphatically. "Break up o' this hot spell. Not much rain I reckon but wind—lots o' wind. Howsomever," he twinkled at me cheerfully, "thet rope'll hold nuther week-two, shouldn't wonder. But I'd not resk any late September gales without a good chain an' mushroom, I dew say thet."

At two o'clock there was not a cloud in the sky. A soft south breeze fluttered our awning and the wide-flung doors gave vistas of blue sea with little yachts rocking sleepily at their moorings. Within the *Arcady* was that peaceful stillness—empha-

BESET BY TEMPEST

sized by the whisper of water alongside—of which only the possessor of a houseboat, alone upon it, knows the utter content.

Not that there was content in my heart—with Chet going about like the ghost of himself and that hurt look in his eyes. But at any rate my fears were past. The girl had refused him and in time Chet would get over it. Resolutely I shut my heart against any feeling of sympathy for her. She stayed aboard very little and when she was aboard, remained in her cabin most of the time. To-day she was having lunch at the Tracys' cottage and would drive with them to Oyster Bay this afternoon.

I had settled down to read the *Transcript* (which of course was mailed to us from Boston every day) when I heard the tender scrape against the step.

“Back so early?” I glanced up over my reading-glasses at Trix who was making the dinghy's painter fast. Then I snatched off the glasses, startled. “Why, it isn't so early, is it? It's almost dusk. Where has the time gone to?”

Trix was breathless.

“It's only four, Miss Hetty. Just look outside and see your 'dusk.' There's a frightful squall coming. We were on the way to Oyster Bay but

FATHOMS DEEP

I made them bring me back. I knew you were all alone on the *Arcady*."

I hurried out on deck and saw the clouds rearing and climbing up from the west. A greenish pall hung over the harbor and yachts were hastening in from the Sound.

"Where's young Tracy?" I asked nervously. "Why didn't he come out with you?"

"He went along with them all on the *Sorceress*. Mr. and Mrs. Hamlin are going clear to Seagate with the Burroughs but Tom Tracy and Pen and Barry are coming back from New York this evening. Don't you think, Miss Hetty, you and I better close up here and go ashore? We could sit with Mrs. Tracy ——"

Sit with that woman for two hours, or maybe longer! And no supper for Chet when he got back from town. I glanced at the storm clouds and then around the familiar cosiness of the *Arcady's* cabin. "I believe I'll stay right here aboard, Trix. We have ridden out a dozen squalls all right; I don't see the sense of rushing ashore just because the menfolks happen to be away."

"I'm game if you are." Trix smiled at me and went to her cabin to put down her hat and motor coat. The *Arcady* was already swinging

BESET BY TEMPEST

round to meet the wind and I began to close the windows.

"It's too late now anyhow," called Trix from her cabin. "See how funny the harbor looks, Miss Hetty—like furry wool. I never saw a squall strike the water like that before, did you? Let's hurry and get things closed up."

Now even the most frigid sense of strain between two persons has to give way somewhat during a mutual endeavor that entails haste, excitement and anxiety. Ever since that Newark trip, a week ago, there had been a distinct consciousness of strain between Trix and myself. She felt it without understanding; probably attributing coolness on my part to the jealousy of a spinster sister. As for me, no Havens could pretend friendliness where she harbored suspicion. And New England reserve engendered by disapproval could not fail to be felt by even a Pittsburgher—if she had the amount of sensitiveness Trix Langdon possessed.

But the maintaining of dignified reserve is not compatible with frantic rushing about to make snug in the teeth of a squall. Trix slammed and lashed casements while I brought in cushions from the stern veranda. She put her slight weight

FATHOMS DEEP

against the forward door while I shot the bolts. Then we ran aft and she swarmed up the deck ladder and passed down the chairs, their canvas billowing in the wind. Fortunately Chet had rolled up the awning before leaving for town. Trix's bobbed hair blew over her face and her short skirt whipped about her knees. Just as the first clap of thunder split the air we made the shelter of the cabin and got our breath, laughing, while pandemonium raged outside.

Never think you know what a squall is if you view it from the porch of a summer hotel. To know the real thrill of it you must be shut up in the cabin of a little craft far out in deep water; must hear the torrential strumming of rain over your head, the scream of the gale, the groaning of your boat's timbers, the rip of loose awning fabric, the thud of seas against your bow; must have that sensation of being a tiny, helpless atom in a vortex of blackness and noise and motion; must see, in lightning flashes that cut the dark, other boats plunging and tearing at their moorings—and hear through it all that steady thud-thud-thud of engines on motor-boats that intensifies your sense of peril. For motor-driven craft can be off and away, should anchor drag or mooring hawser snap, but the house-

BESET BY TEMPEST

boat is helpless. Its only hope is the grip of its anchor on the sands below that tumultuous water.

Trix and I were kneeling on the port transom peering out at the storm. Suddenly I clutched her arm.

“Where is the *Bigenough*? It was there a second ago.”

Trix pressed her face against the rain-lashed window-pane. “It’s gone! Miss Hetty, we’re moving ——”

“That rope!” I screamed, springing to my feet. “It has given way. We’re adrift. And, oh my heavens, Trix, see what’s in front of us!”

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW, ADRIFT AND ON THE ROCKS, OUR GOOD SHIP ALL BUT FOUNDERS

LIKE thistle-down before the gale the *Arcady* swept down that harbor. A hundred yards we had come in little more than sixty seconds and were almost upon the sea-wall. It towered above us, a solid barrier of rocks and piling, and to our horrified eyes, glued against the window, the thing seemed to be advancing toward us by leaps and bounds.

Far, far to port of us was the long dock of the yacht club and the sandy beach where we had laughed at the *Lulu T. Holmes*. Far astern of us the yachts and houseboats rode safely at their moorings. To this desolate part of the harbor where steep, deserted shores rose from the sea-wall to the abandoned quarry had the terrific gale sent our hapless *Arcady*. Who would see us? Or come to our aid from shore? Trix and I at that moment when, as old Alf put it afterward, “the *Our Katy* drug her anchor and driv’ on the pilin’” had an appalling conviction of being alone in the universe.

ON THE ROCKS

Between our stern rail and that sea-wall was now less than twenty feet of water, and as the waves, driven before the wind, smashed against the wall, they returned to wash across our stern deck—and straight into the cabin. Not all our united effort could keep the door shut against those torrents of water.

A houseboat, always pointing into the wind as she pulls on her mooring, is constructed only at her bow end to meet assaults of heavy weather. The bow bulkheads are staunch and the forward door is carefully fitted and set above a combing that keeps out seas that wash across the bow deck. But the stern end of the boat, always to leeward of the gale, has only a light veranda over the water, and the door opening on this veranda is an ordinary door with an ordinary lock.

So every comber that crashed against that sea-wall and came racing back, burst open the flimsily constructed door and tons of water poured down the steps into the cabin of the *Arcady*. It was a question whether we should smash against the sea-wall and go to pieces in the surf, or be sunk by the seas that were pouring into the houseboat.

The roar of the waves against the sea-wall was

FATHOMS DEEP

deafening. The tender, slammed again and again against our stern, was splintered to bits. Water swirled about our ankles and slopped from side to side of the boat as we rolled about in that smothering sea. Books tumbled forward from the shelves. My sewing basket slid off the table, its contents scattering widely. In the galley was the clatter of smashing crockery. Bottles of milk, overturned in the ice-box, sent white rivulets down the dogtrot. The lamp in the cabin gyrated madly. I saw the mascot's eyes, bulging at me from the transom where he had leaped, out of the wet.

And again and again and again were Trix and I, battling to keep that door closed with rolled-up rugs against which we braced our feet, flung back into the room while green water swirled down the steps upon us.

"Oh, won't somebody come! Won't somebody help us?" Trix was sobbing. Dishevelled and soaked to the skin we worked like madwomen to keep out those terrible waves.

A tremendous breaker lifted the *Arcady*, broke in showers of spray against the sea-wall and returning flung Trix and me, along with the roll of rugs, in a heap on the floor. My head struck the table as I went down and the table's unsound leg gave way.

ON THE ROCKS

I was struggling, the heavy table on top of me, and strangling in two feet of water.

I don't know how Trix got the table off me, or how she lifted and dragged me to a transom, but she did. And there she had to leave me while she returned to her battle with the door and the waves that battered against it.

I sat up on the transom, hands holding my dazed head which had been rather badly banged against the table.

"Are we going on the wall, Trix?"

"I don't know, Miss Hetty."

"Are we any nearer to it?"

"I don't know"—she was flung backward and fell again, picking herself out of the flood and returning to put her weight against the door—"I think—we are—a little nearer."

"What shall we do, Trix? Are we going to be drowned?"

Stark terror gripped me. I tried to stagger to my feet and found the water washing over my knees. The wicker chairs were floating about at drunken angles. The mascot over on the starboard transom whined piteously. Far across the harbor lighted windows of the clubhouse gleamed through the slant of rain. How safe that club looked. Oh,

FATHOMS DEEP

did no one see our plight? Would no one come to help us?

"What shall we do-oo-oo, Trix?" Hysteria gripped me.

"You stay right there, Miss Hetty." Trix flung herself against the straining door. "If we begin to sink," she panted, "run out to the forward deck and climb the ladder. We can't—sink very far here. Not more than—six or eight feet even at this tide. The waves make it seem deeper than it is ——"

"But if we strike those rocks and smash up ——"

"Then we've got to jump for it—from the forward end where the water is quieter, and—and try to swim."

"We couldn't swim far in this sea and you know it."

A monster wave hurtled through the doorway and flung Trix to her knees.

"We'd have to try, Miss Hetty." She scrambled up and coming over to me put her arms around me. "Don't cry, dear Miss Hetty. You mustn't lose your nerve now. We're going to get out of this some way." She was crying herself and was trembling, her arms close around me. The little

ON THE ROCKS

dog over on the other transom leaped into the water and swam across to us, scrambling up beside us and huddling close.

Suddenly the girl sprang to her feet and wrung her hands.

“Oh, nothing must happen to me now! Oh, poor Trix ——”

I sat up straight, exasperated even in my terror.

“Oh, poor Hetty too!” I retorted grimly. That girl was thinking of herself, after all, in this dreadful moment. She kept on wringing her hands, her wet hair clinging about her face and her eyes like dark wells.

“It’s a punishment,” she moaned. “I shouldn’t have done it. I never meant the summer to turn out this way. I didn’t realize the deceit of it—about your brother . . .”

She turned to me passionately. “I’m not what you think I am, Miss Havens ——”

I scarcely heard her. The mascot had begun to howl. His yelps of anguish and terror made me frantic. I wrung my hands too. A plank from the shattered tender came smashing into the cabin on a swirling green wave. I crawled up on the transom and knelt, clinging to the window ledge, and trying to pray.

FATHOMS DEEP

"I never should have done it. I never should have done it," wailed Trix. "Oh, Miss Hetty, if you come out of this and I don't, will you tell ——"

Each of us was babbling words unheeded by the other; I, my desperate prayer, and Trix some remorseful self-condemnation that I did not even hear.

Above the tumult of the surf, the crashing and pounding of the *Arcady*, there came a shout.

And then the most glorious sound in the world: the beat of a powerful engine alongside.

And then fierce hammering on the bow door of the houseboat. The blessed hammering of human hands. The shout of human voices.

When Trix and I with trembling, icy fingers managed to get the door open, there was Chet in slicker and sou'wester. Chet's dear, concerned face. Chet's anxious eyes. And back of him Sanderson who ran the club launch.

Oh, how I wanted to throw myself, frightened, limp and bedraggled upon Chet; to feel his arms tight around me; to hear Chet's voice . . . "Hetty, old girl, it's all right. It's all right now."

But Chet never knew I was there.

His arms went out but they closed around Trix Langdon. He held her tight. He stooped his head

ON THE ROCKS

over her soaked hair. To her, his voice, deep and tremulous, murmured, "Trix! My dearest. It's all right. It's all right now."

She clung to him and raised her head and looked at him, and their eyes held and held. Sanderson was grinning, out on the forward deck, and I hung limply against the wall of the dogtrot. And the mascot, shivering as with an ague, crouched against Chet's foot.

Trix, in that tight clasp of Chet's arms, reached out a hand to me.

"Chet . . . your sister!"

And then—and then only—did Chetworth Curtis Havens recollect that I, also, had suffered the anguish of shipwreck.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH SHIPWRECKED MARINERS, ACHIEVING
SHORE, ARE MET BY EVIL TIDINGS

"BUT when did the wind go down?" I exclaimed, suddenly conscious that no terrific storm-blast was sweeping through the open door forward. "Is the squall over?"

"Sure it's over. Been over twenty minutes," laughed Sanderson. "Jest the kick-up of the surf against the sea-wall you been getting. Gale blew itself out in that first big tornado that sent you folks adrift. Bet you ladies thought you were going on the rocks."

I stared at Sanderson.

"Well, weren't we?"

"No, ma'am. How could your stern be facin' the wall—and you driftin'? Your anchor caught 'bout fifty feet from the wall. Mighty lucky for you. If that anchor hadn't caught, th' *Arcady*'d piled up on th' wall sure as shootin'. Gosh"—Sanderson turned to Chet—"how she did go! We saw her from th' club——"

EVIL TIDINGS

"Do you mean to tell me," I shrieked at Sanderson, "that you saw this boat go adrift and nobody came to help us?"

"Oh, we were watchin' you, ma'am. 'Bout twenty of us were watchin' you every minute. We saw you were safe enough. Your anchor had caught; you couldn't get any nearer th' wall than you were. Nothin' but th' backwash to bother you, and maybe your tender stove in. If there'd been a mite o' real danger we'd 'a' been right over with th' launch. There'd been a dozen launches here, ma'am, tempest or no tempest. But we calculated 'twould be all right to leave things as they were till th' squall blew over an' then come out——"

Trix and I stared at each other.

"And they were right there all the time," she whispered hysterically, "ready to help us——"

"Right there, Miss," assured Sanderson. "An' then along comes Doctor Havens off th' six o'clock trolley, runnin' like all possessed and shoutin' that th' *Arcady* wa'n't whar she was and whar was she? Course if we'd known there was only wimmen folks aboard we'd been out long ago, squall or no squall. But we never thought but what Doctor Havens here, or young Mr. Langdon was aboard——"

Chet cut this short. "You two toss some duds

FATHOMS DEEP

in a bag. I'm going to take you over to the Inn for the night."

"I guess you *are*." Thus the skipper of the *Arcady*; contemplating without scruple, desertion of her ship. "I wouldn't spend another night on this houseboat for ten million dollars."

"Not without a chain and mushroom, I wouldn't advise you to," appended Sanderson. "All of us thought you folks were takin' a mighty big chance, relyin' on that rope an' old anchor o' yours."

Our clothes, hanging in the forward cabins, had suffered no damage from the deluge, and presently Trix and I, reclad in dry garments and bags in hand, came out on the bow deck where the launch was tied.

"She'll ride safe enough to-night," Sanderson decided about the *Arcady*, "an' in the mornin' you can pump her out and hang th' carpets in th' sun. An' you better get Ed to move her out to deep water again 'fore another blow. She's pretty near th' sea-wall case she drags any more."

Personally I had no further interest in the fate of the *Arcady*. I climbed stiffly down into the launch where the mascot was already ardently waiting to be taken ashore. All I longed for was solid ground beneath my feet and a cup of hot tea.

EVIL TIDINGS

"This here telegram ——" Sanderson dug in his pocket.

Trix was just stepping into the launch. She drew back on the *Arcady's* deck and stood rigid.

"Telegram! Who for?"

Chet had taken the envelope from Sanderson. He glanced at it and passed it up to Trix.

"Came 'bout an hour ago," mentioned Sanderson. "They megaphoned from th' club but 'twa'n't no use in that squall. You folks weren't noticin' club calls 'bout then. So someone told me to bring it out. Most forgot it, I did."

Trix had ripped open the envelope and was staring at the message.

"Hold the launch." Desperate fright was in her voice. "I've got to get different clothes. And catch the next trolley."

She dashed back inside the houseboat. And Chet dashed after her. Stiffly I climbed out of the launch and followed them. This was a pretty time, indeed, for that girl to choose for one of her town trips.

Never have I seen Chet more angry (over his most insubordinate boy at Braceley) than he was that minute. Trix was standing backed up against

FATHOMS DEEP

the door of her cabin, her eyes lowered and her little chin like a rock.

“Trix, you can’t go. At this hour! After what you have been through. Why, you are ready to drop now; you are shaking so you can scarcely stand.”

“I have got to go.” She gazed desperately at Chet and then at me. “Oh, Miss Hetty, don’t let him try to keep me. I have got to go.”

In her eyes was determination, but also something else—abject fright. Greater fright than she had felt this afternoon even during her hysterical outburst. I spoke to her quietly:

“If you have to go, Trix, wait till you have had some supper—some hot tea anyway. Doctor Havens and I cannot let you go like this. You are not fit ——”

“What’s this urgent business anyway?” demanded my brother impatiently. “Let me attend to it for you, Trix.” He tried to catch at her hand. “Haven’t I the right—now?” he whispered.

She looked back at him steadily. “I’ve got to go, Chet.” It was the first time I had heard her call him that. “Nobody else can do this for me. Please—please don’t try to keep me. I have to

EVIL TIDINGS

make that seven o'clock trolley. . . . Please, Chet."

She had sagged against the door, her little face white as chalk.

"Let her go, Chet." I saw that the girl could not stand much more. This conflict of wills on top of the strain she had been through was ghastly for her. I felt pity for the little thing. "Let her go. Can't you see she *must* go?"

She flashed a grateful glance at me. But Chet caught at her as she opened the door to pass inside.

"Trix, you shall not go. It's madness,—you'd never get there . . . wherever it is. You can go in the morning. I'll assume the responsibility. I forbid you to go to-night."

The girl's slim figure stiffened. Her head went up and she met Chet's angry, miserable eyes with a cold and furious glance.

"You—forbid me? If I die, getting there to-night, I am going. Let me pass!"

Suddenly with a great sob she groped toward him and put her two hands on his shoulders, looking up at him with streaming eyes.

"Chet, let me go. Trust me. I can't tell you about it. But I have to go to-night, Chet. If you do care anything for me, don't stop me ——"

FATHOMS DEEP

“Then I shall go along with you, Trix.”

“No, you must not. Barry will come. Give him this telegram as soon as he gets here——” she thrust the telegram into my hand. “Barry will understand. He will come right along and will be with me.”

Chet stepped back. She went into her cabin and closed the door. When she came out she did not glance at either of us. She had changed to a street frock and the big polo coat and carried a traveling bag. For once she had forgotten the earrings and her small face was wan and without the eternal powder. She huddled in the stern of the launch and gazed straight before her across the water.

“Have you enough money, Trix?” Chet asked as we stepped out on the club float. She nodded but still did not glance at him. I never saw anybody so white as that girl looked. Nor such burning determination holding up an exhausted body. She must have been so tired she could scarcely stagger, but some inner strength enabled her to run like the wind up the long dock and around the club, and to leap on that trolley just as it was pulling out.

Under the hall lamp at the Inn I spread out the telegram and Chet and I read it together.

EVIL TIDINGS

It had been sent from Newark, New Jersey, and contained three words and an initial:

Needed at once. R.

CHAPTER XXV

RELATES HOW, AFTER HOURS OF SUSPENSE, COMES
NEWS OF COMPLETE DISASTER

IN the tiny top-floor room that was the only accommodation the Inn could offer I passed a wretched night.

The bed heaved up and down with the sickening motion of a boat in a heavy sea. I felt stranded and desolate—shipwrecked, no less; and though my body was exhausted my brain was too excited for sleep. I could not sit up and try to read because I had left my glasses aboard the *Arcady*, so for hours I lay wide-eyed and wretched, wondering where Trix was and what awful experience she might be going through. The mascot whined and shivered and at intervals during the night was violently seasick.

Barry and Pen had arrived at nine o'clock and the moment Barry's eye spied that telegram he was off, rushing from the Inn and scrambling aboard the trolley before it started on its return trip to the station. He had turned so white, reading the tele-

SUSPENSE

gram, that freckles stood out like pockmarks on his face.

What unimaginable disaster could have occurred, to upset those twins so?

But there was nothing we could do that night. Chet took Pen out to the *Dixie* with him. Pen, of course, had no shrinking from further houseboat adventure. She had spent a gorgeous day aboard the *Sorceress* which had reached the Twenty-third Street anchorage of the New York Yacht Club well before the storm broke. After it was over she and Barry, with young Tracey, had crossed to Long Island City by the ferry and had returned to the Port by way of Jamaica. Not having experienced the horror of near-shipwreck, Pen declared she was sorry she had missed it and would have found it frightfully thrilling.

As a matter of fact, looking back, I wouldn't have missed it myself. It is singular how a nautical life affects you. When I crawled, wet, bedraggled and exhausted, up to that Inn I was certain no power on earth could ever induce me to set foot on any houseboat again. Yet next morning, with the sun sparkling on a blue sea and the harbor all friendly and gay again with fluttering flags and darting launches, there I was aboard the *Dixie*,

FATHOMS DEEP

setting out my belongings and exclaiming over the superior arrangement of the galley.

The *Arcady* was too wet and her furnishings too badly smashed up to make an attempt to occupy her worth while for the few days that remained. So Pen and I moved into the comfortable forward cabin of the *Dixie* which Barry had been enjoying all summer. We had no idea when the twins would be back. Somehow I felt that when they did come it would be only to pack up and depart for Pittsburgh. We had come to the end of summer and whatever it was that had so peremptorily summoned Trix and her brother away from us, it presaged the break-up of our party.

Summer was over indeed. That day after the storm the temperature dropped twenty degrees. Pen and I shivered in thick sweaters, with doors and windows of the *Dixie* tight shut. The morning sunshine vanished and by noon the harbor was gray and chill and had already a deserted suggestion. From some of the houseboats trunks were being carried over to the club float and trundled to an express wagon waiting in the drive. Many of the yachts had gone out of commission with Labor Day and rocked desolately at their moorings, ports closed and no colors flying. And that day, over

SUSPENSE

all the harbor settled flocks of birds. In dense, dark masses they huddled on the roof of the *Dixie's* cabin, on the abandoned *Arcady*, and on all the deserted yachts, twittering together and making ready for migration.

Old Alf brought red-eyed Ed and his windlass and they hauled the *Arcady* back to deep water. I pointed out to Chet that the smashed tender was no responsibility of ours and that Byrd Jessup could buy a new one out of his August money and serve him right for putting us at the mercy of the elements without a chain and mushroom. But Chet shook his head impatiently. Not even Byrd Jessup's delinquencies could stir him to animation.

We scarcely saw him all day. He came and went in the *Dixie's* tender, fetching across our things from the *Arcady*, and the drawn, suffering look in his face cut me to the heart. Deep lines seemed to have been carved overnight around his mouth.

I knew he was hanging round the club most of the day, hoping for a telephone message or a wire. But none came. Twice, so wrung with sympathy for old Chet was my heart, I was on the point of telling him the Perch Street address—for I was sure that Trix, for whatever purpose, was there.

FATHOMS DEEP

But some queer impulse of loyalty to that girl compelled me to keep her secret. If it was to be told to Chet; if there was anything that could be explained about this inexplicable business—and somehow I was beginning to believe that after all there might be some explanation—I must let Trix do the explaining.

If it was impossible for her to marry Chet, she must in fairness be allowed to tell him why. Chet would demand that of her.

But she must be given her chance to do the telling. I must put a lock on my lips and reserve my suspicions—and give Trix her chance. I could not have told what had caused this change in my feeling toward Trix. Perhaps it had been the pallor and stark terror in her face when she read that telegram,—a terror I somehow felt was not for herself but for someone else, someone near and dear to her.

The long day dragged. All the flavor of house-boat adventure was gone. I did not see how I was to get through another week of it before returning to Braceley. The unexpected arrival, about noon, of little Goldie Dunlop, was a welcome diversion. Her friends who were motoring to Hempstead had dropped her at the yacht club and Sanderson

SUSPENSE

brought her out in the launch. I immediately summoned joyous Pen to the galley and warned her to say no word about the Langdon twins beyond an announcement that they were away for the day.

Pen glared at me. "Of course I shan't, Aunt Hetty. Will you ever realize that I am no longer a child?"

The two girls were looking over Barry's collection of snapshots after lunch when I heard Goldie Dunlop exclaim:

"That isn't Trix Langdon? It *is*. But mercy, how old she looks!"

"Old?" Pen laughed. "Why, she looks a kid—younger than I do. Everybody says so. Maybe it's her earrings that make her look old to you, Goldie. She always wears long dangling ones; different colors to match her sweaters——"

"No, it isn't the earrings. Don't I wear earrings, Pen Havens? But they don't make me look anxious and—and sort of worn out. That's how Trix Langdon looks in this picture, spite of her being snapped laughing."

"She's always laughing. She's splendid company."

"Yes, I reckon the boys will tell you that," mentioned Miss Goldie a trifle spitefully.

FATHOMS DEEP

"But goodness how she's changed." Goldie stared at the photograph. "She's getting a good deal of Leila's look as she grows older—gentler and softer somehow. They always were a lot alike, but of course Leila is dignified and dresses more quietly—the way a school-teacher has to. And Leila's hair is wonderful; down to her knees. Leila hated it when Trix had her hair bobbed. She said Trix reminded her of a Hottentot.

"Yes, ma'am," summed up Miss Dunlop, not without satisfaction, "Trix Langdon has suffered. You can see it in this picture of her. She'll lose her looks if she doesn't watch out. Gee, she must have suffered tortures since that Rossiter boy's death ——"

"Rossiter!" Pen sat up straight. She glanced at me over Goldie Dunlop's bent head. Was that boy's name Rossiter?"

"Why, of course, I thought you knew. Sam Rossiter—Mr. Syd Rossiter's younger brother. The Rossiters have been awfully kind to Trix. Mrs. Syd wanted Trix to spend this summer at their camp in Maine. Leila is there now but Trix wrote my sister Muriel that she would never go where she couldn't take her violin. And Mrs. Syd simply can't stand hearing the violin because

SUSPENSE

young Sam and Trix used to play so much together. It breaks her all up, Mrs. Syd says ——”

“Then why ——” I began.

Pen sent me a ferocious glare behind her guest’s back.

“Trix is a perfect marvel with that violin,” Pen mentioned.

I stared at the child.

Goldie was flipping over the pages of the snapshot album. “She brought the violin down here, I suppose.”

“Of course she did,” asserted my niece calmly, “and we have certainly enjoyed her music this summer.”

Afterward I had it out with Pen—at supper. It was a dismal meal; Chet was not eating a thing and I couldn’t eat either, watching his tormented eyes. He started up attentively, however, when I referred to the violin matter and sternly accused my niece of the first lie I had ever heard on her lips.

“And for pity’s sake, Pen Havens, why did you go out of your way to utter a deliberate falsehood like that? It was not only a lie but an uncalled for assertion. I’m too grieved, Penny, to express

FATHOMS DEEP.

my feelings. After the way I've tried to bring you up ——”

Pen laid down her butter-spreader and regarded me with patience.

“Aunt Hetty, can't you understand? Trix Langdon is in some frightful mess. I don't know what it is. Neither do you. But we have got to stand by her ——”

“But lying, Pen,—deliberate, unnecessary prevarication about her violin ——”

“Can't you see, Aunt Hetty? Trix has gone out of her way this summer to let her friends know she is here, on the *Arcady* and at Port Madison. Remember all those post-cards she has sent out? And the newspaper clippings? She has some reason for wanting everybody to be certain she is at the Port. I'm sure I don't know what it is—but I know she has some reason. And I know well enough that under her laughing and the jolly larks she has had, she has been miserable every minute. She and Barry have some secret and some big worry. Wherever they have gone, Trix has trusted us ——”

“She hasn't trusted us very far,” I retorted sadly.

“Well, perhaps she couldn't. Perhaps it is

SUSPENSE

somebody else's secret. I for one," maintained Pen, "mean to stand by Trix and help her any way I can."

Chet rose from the table and crossed the cabin to get his tobacco pouch. On the way he paused, the briefest instant, to lay an affectionate hand on his little girl's shoulder. He took down the anchor lantern from its hook and carried it to the galley to fill it and trim the wick.

Dusk drew down and still no word from the twins. The sunset gun boomed now by half-past seven and in spite of the daylight-saving arrangement darkness seemed to come early. When the supper dishes had been washed and put away Pen took her knitting into the aft cabin where Chet was pretending to figure Braceley expenses. Most of the time his pencil rested idly on the paper while he stared into vacancy.

The *Dixie's* cabin was attractive with its oak panelling, bright rugs and silk-shaded lamp, but I could not read or sew. I wrapped Pen's angora scarf over my sweater and went out to the little stern deck where I shivered in the frosty air and watched night draw down over the harbor. Old Alf was rowing about in his flat-bottomed boat, putting riding lights on yachts whose owners had

FATHOMS DEEP

departed. His oars creaked as he pottered about the harbor. There was no rose and copper glow on the water to-night and no stars twinkled out. I missed the cheery, lighted windows of the *Big-enough*. Somehow the whole harbor looked deserted and desolate,—like winter coming.

I heard the eight o'clock trolley rumble down the hill. Then suddenly I was aware of the club launch speeding over the water toward the *Dixie*. Someone was standing up in the launch.

It was Barry.

He sprang aboard the *Dixie* and the launch veered away. And instantly Chet was at the door, searching Barry's face with anxious, questioning eyes.

Without a word of greeting to any of us Barry went into the cabin. His young face had the look of one who has suffered devastating emotional strain. Chet closed the door and Barry stood facing us with that dull, stunned look in his eyes.

"My sister Trix is dead."

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WHICH IS REVEALED TO OUR BEWILDERED SKIPPER
A GLIMMER OF LIGHT THROUGH THE FOG

PEN, with a sharp cry, ran toward Barry who had collapsed on the port transom and was sobbing like an overwrought child. Then she paused and looked at her father. Some intuitive divination of the greater need made her go to Chet and fling her arms about him.

Chet stood there, rigid, oblivious of Pen's clinging arms, only his eyes alive—staring at Barry.

The boy was trying to get hold of himself, choking back his sobs and swallowing hard. He got out his handkerchief and mopped his eyes. When he spoke, his voice was hoarse and unnatural. He did not look at us but stonily regarded the rug at his feet.

"There was an automobile accident. Trix has hated automobiles since last winter when Sam was killed in that smash-up. She would never get in a car if she could help it. But Mrs. Rossiter persuaded her to go. A tree fell down on the car. It was a touring car with the curtains up. The tree

FATHOMS DEEP

crashed right through the hood of the car. Mrs. Rossiter and the driver got off without a scratch, but Trix—Trix was killed.”

“When?”

Chet asked it. He had not moved and seemed not to know that Pen’s arms were tight around him. His terrible eyes stared at Barry.

“Yesterday afternoon. They had been driving out through the Oranges. And the chauffeur was hurrying to get to shelter out of the storm. A lot of trees were uprooted. One fell on the car ——”

I sprang from the chair into which, stricken at Barry’s news, I had fallen. “But Barry, yesterday—in that storm—Trix was aboard the *Arcady*, with me. How could she ——”

Barry looked at me with drenched, dull eyes. Then he lowered his head again, staring at the rug.

“Trix is dead, Miss Hetty. . . . You never saw Trix. It was . . . it was Leila who was here.”

I heard Chet’s breath go in a sort of shuddering groan. He broke away from Pen’s arms and strode over to the boy crouching on the transom. He took hold of Barry’s stooped shoulders. I had seen Chet do just so with unnerved lads at Braceley.

“Barry ——! Are you telling us that your sis-

LIGHT THROUGH THE FOG

ter who was here with us all summer is not the one who was killed?"

"Trix was killed." Barry stared heavily at the rug. His elbows rested on his knees, his big hands hung limply. "Trix was killed yesterday. . . . It was Leila who was here . . . all the time. . . ."

"But Leila was in Maine," I protested.

"No, Mrs. Rossiter was in Maine. Leila was here. And Trix was in Newark. That's where Leila went every week,—to see Trix. Syd Rossiter went too. They were very good to Trix—the Rossiters. They ——"

"But Barry," I cried, "why did ——"

Chet glanced at me warningly. "Let him tell it his own way, Hetty. Can't you see he is trying to pull himself together? Now, Barry, old chap, take your time. You came back here to tell us all about it, didn't you?" Chet sat down beside Barry on the transom and put an arm across the boy's shoulders.

"Leila sent me back—to tell you. She said you must be told all about it now. You see," Barry sat up straight and looked at Chet and me, "you've got to stand by us; or what we have been doing all summer . . . for Trix. . . . It would

FATHOMS DEEP

count for nothing. We have all got to stand together now; you people and Leila and I, and the Rossiters. For Trix's sake. We have—we have got to save Trix—now, just as if she had gone on living.”

So many things were flashing through my mind with stunning clarity of illumination: Leila here, posing as Trix; dressed in Trix's clothes. Trix over at that Perch Street apartment in care of some faithful family servitor. Trix's golden head at the window that day. Trix, herself, in that cerise negligee, smoking a cigarette. Trix sobbing in the window and Leila there afterward in street frock and hat. Leila, the older sister, harassed, feigning light-heartedness here with us; establishing for some reason that must be kept secret the illusion of the younger sister's gay summer at the Port.

“Pen dear,” I suggested firmly, “Auntie thinks perhaps you had better go and wait in the other cabin while father and Barry and I talk this over. I'll tell you all about it later ——”

But Chet put out a detaining hand as Pen moved unwillingly toward the door.

“Pen will stay right here, Hetty.”

“But Chet ——”

LIGHT THROUGH THE FOG

"Pen will stay, Hetty. This concerns Pen as much as any of us. My girl is big enough to hear it, whatever it is--and to help Barry and his sister in any way she can."

He drew Pen down beside him and smiled into her young, scared eyes. "We are all going to stand by—Leila," Chet added.

And suddenly I realized what made that light in Chet's eyes.

Leila . . . the older sister! No undeveloped little flapper with promise of fine qualities, but Leila, the woman grown and with those qualities already established. Leila, the woman of thirty,—Chet's equal and Chet's mate. Leila it had been all the time, ready to sacrifice herself to guard the secret of the little sister she loved. Leila, released now, probably, from that dark tangle which had held her apart from my brother. . . .

I saw the hope in Chet's eyes, the restrained happiness, as he waited for Barry to speak.

And then we heard the story; the pitiful story of a self-willed, undisciplined girl defiant of restraint on the part of a sister not sufficiently older to control a nature rebellious and perverse. A girl, dangerously lovely, dangerously emotional, run-

ning her own gait with other wild young things who snapped fingers at conventions they pronounced archaic, and substituted for the chaperone (obsolete and comic) a hard worldly-wiseness. Youth undefended by reverence for standards and traditions. Youth demanding spice with its diversions. Youth intoxicated by its own freedom, scouring the country in high-powered, noisy motor cars, cosmetic kits and cigarette cases in feminine wrist-bags, cleverly shaped flasks fitted into masculine hip pockets, and the finishing revel likely to overlap dawn. Youth in an era when old folks deplore the passing of long engagements and those pleasant betrothal customs that led, after decent interval, to wedding-bells and bridesmaids and rites of dignity and solemnity . . . customs abandoned because the smart modern way of slipping off and announcing marriage casually as a suddenly conceived lark is so many, many times the only way to save a situation.

This little Langdon girl overtaken by disaster. And young Rossiter killed just as the quick engagement and marriage had been planned. The unhappy child's family rallying to her aid, desperately seeking, and presently finding a way out for the girl and for themselves. Trix established

LIGHT THROUGH THE FOG

in an inconspicuous retreat where no one would be likely to happen on her hiding-place. The Rossiters' faithful housekeeper installed to watch over her. Sarah Rossiter in Maine, receiving and forwarding mail for Leila Langdon. And Leila herself posing as Trix on the *Arcady*, and sending reports of her gay summer to all the Langdon and Rossiter connection. And Syd Rossiter standing by in New York, keeping in touch with all of them.

September, as the older sister had said, would see the end of it. Martha Briggs, the efficient housekeeper, was to have remained in the Newark apartment when Trix returned to Pittsburgh with her sister Leila and the Rossiters; ostensibly a happy return of the Langdons from summer holidays at Port Madison and Maine camp. Then later, the Rossiters were to have launched their plan (often vaguely discussed by the childless couple in past years) of adopting an heir to the Rossiter fortune, and the child would be taken to Pittsburgh and brought up as a Rossiter in the Rossiter home.

This was Barry's story.

The three words in the telegram had been agreed on among them all as instant summons to Newark.

It had been hard on Leila, Barry declared. It

had taken a lot of grit for Leila to go through with it. He had helped all he could . . . sometimes he had had to bully her and be disagreeable—to keep her up to it, the poor girl got so discouraged and dead tired of the part she had undertaken.

“Leila isn’t used to playing tennis hard like that, and for hours at a time.” The boy looked forlornly around at us. “She was pretty near a wreck once or twice. And she hated the boys pestering her at dances and making smarty remarks they knew well enough Trix Langdon would have stood for. And she got sick of pretending to want a good time every minute. Leila’s not like that; she’s not restless and lively. She likes to read and take walks and sit around and look at sunsets—that sort of thing. Leila has been a dead game sport and I’m proud of her.

“And she worried a lot about you people.” Barry looked from Chet to me.

“But that’s all over,” said Chet quickly. “I am going back to Newark with you to-night, Barry.”

“That’s just what you mustn’t do,” protested Barry anxiously. He got up and walked about the cabin, hands in pockets and nervous glance seeking the rug. “Leila was afraid you would want

LIGHT THROUGH THE FOG

to do that. She asked me not to let you. Don't you see, Doctor Havens, you people can help most right here. Syd and Sarah Rossiter and I are going back to Pittsburgh to-morrow with Leila. We . . . we shall take Trix back home——” Barry swallowed hard and his eyes filled again. “What you can do is to see the thing through for us here at the Port ——”

“How—see it through?” I demanded. “What do you mean by that, Barry?”

“Why, of course everybody here at the Port will have to know that Trix Langdon is dead. Leila can't go on pretending to be Trix,—she has to go back to Pittsburgh and be her own self. So Trix's death—the accident and all, will have to come out in the papers; and some explanation will have to be given here at the Port. Something about Trix having gone to stay with a friend and being killed in an accident . . . last night. We can't say it was yesterday in the storm, for she was supposed to be here then. It must be given to the papers as last evening. Sanderson brought her a telegram and she went off to visit her friends, and while she was driving with them in the evening the accident happened. Then I am summoned by bad news but none of us knows just what has

occurred. I come back to-night to tell you and of course you people are all upset (Trix having been here with you all summer). Syd Rossiter is going to attend to the newspaper part of it and you can say my sister Leila has come down from Maine and we are taking Trix's body to Pittsburgh ——"

"Good heavens, Barry Langdon ——!" I quailed, limp on the transom where I had dropped, at this well-planned but upsetting campaign of prevarication and at the part Pen and I were expected to play in it.

"Chet," I wailed, turning desperately to my brother, "I couldn't do all that. I couldn't make up all those—those stories. And Pen couldn't. Somebody would suspect something because Pen and I would never be able to get through with it ——"

"I would," asserted Pen stoutly. But her father waved her aside.

"Of course you couldn't." Chet's kind, understanding tone soothed me at once. "What you will do, Hetty—you and Pen—will be to start home to-night. I'll take you to the Grand Central and put you on the midnight sleeper for Boston. Then I'll go to Newark . . . I'm going, Barry, you can't stop me. I have to see Tr—see your sister.

LIGHT THROUGH THE FOG

Then, when you have started for Pittsburgh, I will come back here, close up the *Dixie* and ship our trunks to Boston. I shall reply to inquiries here that we went at once to Newark when we heard Barry's terrible news and that my sister and Pen were so shocked and unstrung they could not bear to return to the Port so I sent them straight home to Braceley. Will that do, Barry?"

"It will, Doctor Havens, and I—I think you are mighty fine, sir. Leila and I thought you would stand by us ——"

Barry stopped . . . looked toward the doorway. A boat was bumping against the *Dixie's* step.

The Sealyham dashed, yelping, across the cabin. Chet stepped to the door and opened it. Outside it was very dark and the frosty air rushed into the small cabin that had been warmed by the lamps. Somebody had stepped on the after deck from a tender and was making the boat's painter fast.

Barry leaped to his feet.

"Leila ——! What are you doing here?"

CHAPTER XXVII

HOW, OUR VOYAGE BEING ENDED, WE COME AT LAST TO OUR HOME HARBOR

SHE stood, framed by the doorway, and even Chet hung back a bit shyly—so amazing the alteration in the girl who had been one of us all summer.

Her black frock, just purchased and in the mode that had changed almost overnight, clung about her ankles. The long frock made her seem taller, and a loose black wrap and small hat with thrown-back veil added to the effect of height and dignity. The bobbed hair that had tossed about our Trix's face had been somehow confined and trimly coiffed under a net.

But oh, how sweet she looked! How lovely in the new aspect of womanly dignity. Her little face under the drooping veil, free now of cosmetics, an older face than we had known but a face stronger, finer and infinitely more appealing.

The violet eyes, darkly shadowed by pain, sought each of our faces in turn before she spoke.

HOME HARBOR

"I borrowed a tender from old Alf's dock. I came back to pack up some things. . . ."

Then she ran toward me, catching at the hands I had unconsciously stretched out to her. "No, I didn't. No, I didn't. I came back because I *had* to come. . . . I could not leave you . . . all . . . this way. I had to come back as myself. And not let you remember me as only pretending. . . ."

"You'll stand by me, won't you?" she whispered, looking at me through flooding tears. "You'll help me now, dear Miss Hetty, to—to protect Trix?"

"Of course, my child." I patted her hand that I still held in mine. Pen came over and flung her young arms about the black-clad figure.

"'Course we are going to stand by you. Don't you worry about that. We think you have been a wonderful sister. We'll help you protect Trix, M-M-Miss Langdon."

Leila turned and caught Pen by the shoulders. Her winning smile broke through her tears.

"Why, Penny dear. Bless your old heart. I am the same girl, you know, that you have wiped dishes with and raced sweaters with all summer.

FATHOMS DEEP.

Don't 'Miss Langdon' me. You're a trump, Penny, and I love you. . . ."

The two girls clung together. Leila looked up over Pen's shoulder. Her eyes sought Chet.

"And you?"

"My dear, what you plan is my plan. What trouble you bear is my trouble . . . you know that." Chet did not move from where he stood but his eyes looked steadily into hers. And any woman, I thought, might thank God for a look like that in a man's eyes; tenderness was there, and trust, and assurance of strength efficiently ready to take and bear whatever burden, to carry whatever responsibility.

Those two did not move toward each other but their eyes held in that long look. She caught her breath in a little sobbing sigh. Then she turned and put her arms tight around my neck and clung to me.

"Oh, Miss Hetty,—Miss Hetty!"

My arms wrapped round her and held her close. Suddenly I knew that I loved her very dearly. And that searching the wide world over, I could not have found, for my Chet, a girl I wanted more.

"You don't know"—she stood away from me

HOME HARBOR

and faced us all—"you don't know how dreadful it has been for me. To deceive you all the way I did. I never realized how it would be or I could never have undertaken it." Her hands gripped each other nervously, her eyes were entreating. "Oh, don't you see how desperate we were? Something had to be decided. Some way had to be found to take care of Trix this summer . . . so people would never guess . . . so her life should not be spoiled.

"It looked so simple—not wronging anybody—for me to take Trix's clothes and play her part somewhere, and then—when she went home in October—to step into my own place—my school work and all. And Trix just to go on, with nobody ever guessing about this summer—but just believing she had been at Port Madison. We thought we could save Trix that way. She would know, and the Rossiters, and Barry and I; but the rest of the world would never know. She was so young and it would have spoiled her life forever. I wanted to give my little Trix a chance . . . this way."

"We understand, Leila," I broke in gently—to quiet her, for she was sobbing wildly and her words were growing confused because of the choking sobs.

"We don't any of us blame you. We all understand." And indeed my New England pride with its New England instinct to hide and bury deep from the prying and the curious any family trouble and disgrace, did understand. I knew that, in like circumstance, I should have done for a sister what Leila Langdon had done—had I possessed the courage and the ability to do it.

"You see we never dreamed of its ending like this." She had got hold of herself now and was speaking more quietly. "Or that it might involve you people. We just expected to be Barry and Beatrice up to the minute of good-bye and then go back to Pittsburgh, and perhaps never see you again. And—and Leila could have written to Miss Havens, as she used to, now and then. I never thought," she faltered, "how I should come to love you all. How it would hurt to feel I was deceiving you. I never knew"—her voice sank to a whisper—"there would be—Chet."

And suddenly she dropped on the transom behind her and hid her face in her hands.

"But there was—Chet." With one stride he was beside her, his hands on the quivering shoulders. "Leila! Look up, dearest. Here's Chet. And here's Hetty. And here's Pen. We are all going

HOME HARBOR

to be one family now. We are all going to stand together . . . to help each other ——”

“Gosh!—me too. Count me in the family circle.” Barry leaped across the cabin. His arm went around Pen and the look that passed between those two youngsters was a revelation for hitherto unobservant Aunt Mehitable.

“All right, brother Barry,” Chet smiled at the lad and wisely took advantage of the opportunity to break up a too emotional moment, “you hop in the dinghy and nip across to the *Arcady* and fetch your sister’s belongings. She would better pack your suitcases now and I can forward them by express. Hetty, you and Pen show what you can do with our stuff. Remember I have to tote it all ashore and put it in those trunks at the Inn. It struck three bells just now; if you and Pen are going to make the midnight train for Boston you had better hustle.”

Barry made his trip to the *Arcady* and then went ashore to find a taxi. The car was to wait for us in the club drive. The *Dixie* would be locked up and abandoned until Chet should return sometime to-morrow to pack and send on the luggage. I sighed with relief that it would not be my task to come back to the Port and meet shocked excla-

mations, questions, sympathetic but curious interest of summer acquaintances, when notice of Trix Langdon's sudden death in Newark appeared in the newspapers.

Chet's quiet assumption of responsibility in the matter smoothed away some of the drawn lines in Leila Langdon's face. She had cast aside hat and wrap and was working furiously with the rest of us, gathering together personal belongings and cramming them into bags and suitcases.

Those bright, now so pathetic garments of the Trix we had known: the orange sweater, the brief, impudent tennis skirts, the spangled dance frock, the twinkling earrings,—fantastic trappings of a brave, greatly loving little pretender. I saw her gazing with sorrowful, wistful eyes at the fuchsia feather fan, outspread in her hands.

"Trix's favorite fan," she whispered chokingly. "How many times I've seen her laughing over it. I tried . . . to laugh over it . . . the way Trix did. To make people believe Trix was here, safe and gay and happy. Oh, Trix . . . oh, poor little sister. . . ."

"It is better this way, isn't it, my dear?" I slipped an arm round her. "The best and most

HOME HARBOR

merciful way for Trix. It would have been pretty hard for Trix—to go on.”

She closed the fan and laid it in its box. “Yes, it is the best way. The kindest way out for Trix. I’m going to think that now . . . thank you, Miss Hetty. God has been kind to Trix—and good to me too, sending me another sister—like you, dear—Hetty.”

We stood together on the after deck, Leila and I, waiting for Chet to come back for us in the tender. Barry and Pen had gone over on the first trip accompanied by the mascot, unhappily stowed in the loathed traveling basket in which he was to journey to Braceley. Pen and I were delighted to have the companionable little dog, and since Barry must shortly be off to college and Leila must resume her teaching and finish out the winter term, Braceley seemed the best place for the Sealyham.

“And in the spring I’ll come to Braceley,” Leila had promised simply and very sweetly, her hands in Pen’s and mine and her eyes looking past us at Chet.

Now we stood on the *Dixie’s* little after deck, waiting for Chet to come and get us. I had put out the lamp in the cabin and had locked the door. It was not like saying good-bye to the *Arcady’s*

familiar and beloved belongings, but it was saying good-bye to summer and houseboat adventure. Out on the little stern deck and with the locked door behind us, we looked across the sleeping harbor, at the friendly riding-lights stabbing down into the water, at the distant bright windows of the club, at the long, shadowy curve of the shore. Under us the incoming tide lapped and whispered. How I was going to miss that whispering of water alongside! Not far away the old *Arcady* rocked cosily at her mooring, as though no storm-wind had ever sent her careering on that wild voyage to the sea-wall.

Leila stood, hands resting on the rail, eyes on the *Arcady's* riding-lantern that swung gently to and fro. I wondered if she was thinking what I was thinking. . . .

That perhaps there would be other houseboat summers for us all together: for our commodore, our skipper, our mate, our merry crew, our little deck-steward, and our spoilt but engaging mascot.

Chet's boat came leaping over the water. He drew in at the step and reached up one hand.

"You first, Hetty."

When he had me safely in the stern of the dinghy

HOME HARBOR

he stepped aboard the *Dixie* to get the bags. Leila was still looking at the *Arcady's* light—a golden glimmer moving against the dark. She did not turn, but held out her hand to Chet. They stood for a moment, hand in hand, gazing silently across at the *Arcady*.

“We’ll come back,” Chet said softly.

“Yes,” she promised, eyes on the swinging anchor light, “we’ll come back, Chet.”

THE END

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